

Community Heart & Soul®

— Guided by what matters most —

HAMMONTON, NEW JERSEY

Hammonton, New Jersey is located in Atlantic County in close proximity to Philadelphia and Atlantic City. It sits within the vast Pinelands National Reserve, a unique region known for its picturesque landscape and outdoor recreation opportunities. Known as the "Blueberry Capital of the World," Hammonton is home to thriving blueberry farms, a key part of its economy and identity. The town also boasts a thriving historic downtown with a flourishing arts scene alongside restaurants and local businesses that highlight the community's Italian heritage and growing Hispanic population. It cherishes its local traditions and community events. It is proud of its yearly celebrations including the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Festival, Red White and Blueberry Festival, Food Truck Festival, Hispanic Heritage Month, and the Puerto Rican Festival.

POPULATION:
14,700

CHALLENGE:
Managing and
directing growth

FOCUS: building
community
connections and
opportunities for
collaboration

KEY TOOL:
Community
Network Analysis

Hammonton “by the numbers”:

- 250 interviews conducted to gather input from residents
- 500 data points collected at 13 local events and 8 civic group meetings
- 82 community members attended a summit to review Hammonton’s 10 Heart & Soul statements, which were later adopted and displayed in City Hall in 2 languages
- 418 survey responses collected to get feedback on action items

Local conditions:

Hammonton chose to participate in the Community Heart & Soul initiative to build on its momentum as a thriving, connected town. With a revitalized downtown, a burgeoning arts scene, and a growing craft beverage industry, Hammonton was attracting new residents and visitors alike. Community Heart & Soul offered a way to bring people together around shared values while recognizing and respecting diverse perspectives. By fostering collaboration, strengthening community

engagement, and encouraging new leadership, the Heart & Soul initiative helped ensure that Hammonton can continue to grow in a way that is inclusive, vibrant, and reflective of what matters most to residents.

Partnership:

Through Transform South Jersey, the Community Foundation of South Jersey and its partners brought Community Heart & Soul to southern New Jersey and supported community efforts. A vital partner to Hammonton’s Heart & Soul initiative, the Community Foundation of South Jersey contributed shared learning opportunities, a designated Heart & Soul Coach, overall staff support, and funding.

Volunteer and Community Response:

Despite launching in March 2020 amidst the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, Hammonton’s community rallied behind Community Heart & Soul with dedication and enthusiasm. A committed Heart & Soul Core Team quickly adapted, hosting virtual meetings and developing creative outreach strategies to gather input despite the constraints of social distancing. Volunteers engaged residents through town mailers, student-led projects (such as high schoolers interviewing their friends and family), and working with partners like Allies in Caring to gather input from the Latino community. Once they were feasible, in-person events like the Community Summit and data-gathering sessions helped shape the town’s Heart

& Soul Statements and community action plan, fostering collaboration and ensuring all voices were heard.

Heart & Soul Outcomes:

- The Hammonton Community Endowment reached its initial fundraising goal just over a month after hosting its first event. Over \$65,000 has been raised toward the endowment, funds that will support community-driven action items going forward.
- An annual fundraising event, The Hammonton Harvest Concert, was created, partnering community groups such as the Kiwanis, Sons of Italy, Rotary, Mount Carmel Society, MainStreet Hammonton, and Hammonton Makers.
- Trees were planted in the downtown area and in local parks to enhance the community.
- A Heart and Soul Core Team member ran for town council.
- Diversity was included in the Board of Education's strategic plan after visits from the Heart and Soul Core Team.
- The community master plan was created after receiving input from the Heart & Soul Core Team and many community members and stakeholders.

