

Historic Downtown Hamburg

Located in the lower southeast corner of the state, Hamburg became officially recognized as a town on November 30, 1848. Not only is Hamburg the seat of the county government, but it is also near the geographic center of the county, providing access to shopping and services from all the other parts of the county. Within the city, Hamburg retains many old homes and other buildings, including several listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Those structures include the Hamburg United Methodist Church, constructed in 1910; the Watson-Sawyer House, built in 1870; the Bunkley House; and the Hamburg Presbyterian Church, a craftsman style building dating from 1871 and now housing the Hamburg Garden Club. The traditional downtown square, which held the Ashley County Courthouse until a new one was constructed in 1969, now includes a gazebo in its center. The square is surrounded with businesses and is the heartbeat of our historic town. The gazebo and square function as the center of activities for the Hamburg Area Chamber of Commerce's Armadillo Festival, an event now over 48 years old and held the first weekend of May. The festival features everything from a carnival, big name entertainment, food vendors, arts & crafts booths, and so much more. The square also serves as a center for the Hamburg Area Chamber of Commerce's annual Hamburg Holidays event to mark the beginning of the Christmas season each year, and it is aglow with holiday lights from about Thanksgiving until the first of the new year. Located two blocks off the square, the Ashley County Museum, built in 1918 as a private residence and now listed on the National Register of Historic Places, has exhibits depicting the history of the city and county. A relatively new addition to Hamburg is the Ashley County Veterans' Memorial, located on the grounds of the Ashley County Courthouse. The memorial lists the names of all Ashley County veterans killed in the twentieth century wars as well as the names of many of those who served in the various branches of the military.

Hamburg has one the largest school districts in our area. The Hamburg School District currently has an enrollment of 1863 students. The school district works closely with the Chamber of Commerce and other local organizations to help establish a well-trained future workforce. The high school is piloting the Arkansas Department of Education Professional Learning Communities program. They have partnered with the Chamber to head the Community Service Learning Community Partner program. Students will gain one credit towards graduation by volunteering in their community. This program helps to educate and expose students to the hospitality management industry, healthcare careers, retail management, and entrepreneurship. The Noble/Allbritton Elementary, Portland Elementary, and Hamburg Middle School are all involved in the A+ Schools Program. The A+ Schools program has a large focus on the

arts. Hamburg is uniquely positioned between two universities, University of Arkansas-Monticello and University of Louisiana at Monroe, and is less than fifteen miles from the University of Arkansas-Monticello College of Technology. Hamburg High School currently offers vocational programs in welding, nursing, and Microsoft certifications through a partnership with UAM-CTC.

Hamburg retains the qualities which have made small towns attractive. The city is safe, with relatively little crime, and it is an excellent place to raise a family. Families can still walk the streets at night around the square and in the early morning hours the streets are filled with joggers and people walking for exercise. The city currently has two city parks, walking trails, and a youth sports facility within Norman Park. Norman Park has multiple baseball and softball fields, as well as a kids park area and a pavilion that can be reserved for events. In 2017, a sales tax was passed to update the Norman Park facilities. The proposed project budget is \$2.1 million and includes the addition of two new ball fields, a tee-ball field, new expanded parking lot, and new playground equipment.

Hamburg, like many other small towns, faces a major challenge. The city is trying to adapt to new economic times while at the same time preserving what is special about living in a small town. The residents of Hamburg believe that they are on the right track, saving what is good, while coming face to face with changing economic times. Come see historic downtown Hamburg!

