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Orchestra size: Group 3  
Area population: 800,000

**Project description:** The Tour of Homes was a “replacement” project for what would have been our 44<sup>th</sup> annual Designer Showhouse. Six homes in downtown Charleston were open to guests for two days (May 22/23, Saturday and Sunday) from 10am to 6pm. Guests were encouraged to walk the three-mile route and stop for brunch or lunch at one of the city’s many restaurants.

**Project objectives:**

- Ensure the safety of our guests and homeowners
- Maintain the focus on design
- Keep it simple
- Minimize the number of volunteers required
- Produce a net profit of at least \$50,000

**Financials:** We knew we would not generate as much profit as our typical Designer Showhouse (\$75,000 to \$95,000) but hoped that we could net at least \$50,000.

• Gross revenues from ticket sales	\$54,090
• Sponsorships from local businesses in tour book	4,858
• Expenses (printing, advertising)	4,739
• Net revenue	\$54,209

A local magazine publisher also donated two one-page ads with a value of \$3,000.

We were very pleased with the income from this event, and at the excellent flow-through from gross to net revenue.

**Volunteer requirements:** One of our concerns was whether or not our volunteer force would want to be out and about with hundreds of guests. This was one of the driving factors behind our decision to do a tour of homes rather than the Designer Showhouse - which requires over 1,000 volunteer shifts.

We intentionally kept the event committee small. There were a handful of members involved in the search for tour homes, which turned out to be easier than expected. The “steering committee” included three members in addition to the chairs who helped make some of the key decisions. The two co-chairs took on much of the planning and oversaw the actual event execution. Our marketing chair designed all of the publicity and the tour book layout. One additional member developed the SignupGenius templates for volunteer recruitment. We had



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a few Zoom calls to discuss dates, pricing, logistics, and publicity. Our philosophy was “keep it simple” and we succeeded in doing that.

There were 12 house captains, each of whom had responsibility for a home on one of the tour days. Depending on the size of the home, between 2 and 5 docents were needed to monitor traffic and answer questions. We also had 2 volunteers each day at the ticket exchange, which was located at a local design and art gallery. The total volunteer contingent numbered 132.

#### Results:

- Just under 1,000 guests visited the homes
- We heard glowing reviews from many guests who were excited to have a fun event to attend
- Our guest profile skewed younger and more male than our typical Designer Showhouse attendees
- Many visitors to Charleston were referred by downtown hotels
- We achieved our financial objective by netting \$54,200

