

**Blackstone Valley Tourism Council Inc.
Headquarters, 1420 Broad Street, Central Falls,
Polar Express Station, 1 Depot Square, Woonsocket,
Blackstone River Heritage State Park Gateway Center, I-295N, Lincoln
Blackstone Valley Visitor Center, 175 Main Street, Pawtucket
Rhode Island USA 02863**

Annual Work Plan

January 2024

This Annual Work Plan supports the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council's Strategic Plan. The Tourism Council is the state-designated tourism development agency for the cities of Central Falls, Pawtucket, Woonsocket, East Providence and the towns of Cumberland, Lincoln, North Smithfield, Smithfield, Burrillville and Glocester, Rhode Island. The Council works with CommerceRI and each city and town to develop tourism in Rhode Island's Blackstone River Valley. The Council is a not-for-profit organization, incorporated in 1985.

The Council serves Rhode Island and the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor communities, applying several thoughtful philosophies in its work: place-making, resiliency, sustainability, geo-tourism, whole-community tourism development programs that align with resident needs to enhance and protect the character, environment, arts, culture, heritage, aesthetics, and commerce of Rhode Island's Blackstone River Valley.

In our efforts to welcome visitors to the Blackstone Valley, the Tourism Council operates or manages several multi-cultural events, two visitor centers, several support and river cleanup boats, twelve dragon boats, an English-built canal boat and a 40-passenger river boat, to leverage the Valley's attractiveness.

Ongoing Programs and Projects of work

- Promote the Blackstone Valley International Food Trail
- Consider the Rhode Island Shoreline Dinner event at Festival Pier for September
- Assist the Blackstone River Valley's National Park development where needed
- Continue work on the development of a Riverboat Landing at Market Square in Woonsocket.
- Continue our partnership with Mystic Aquarium on the E/V *Blackstone Valley Explorer*
- Operate the E/V *Blackstone Valley Explorer* from Central Falls Landing and Festival Pier in Pawtucket
- Execute the *Blackstone Valley Heritage Golf Tournament* at Crystal Lake Country Club in Burrillville
- Operate the *Blackstone Valley Scenic Railway Fall Foliage* excursion to Putnam, CT
- Operate the *Blackstone Valley Polar Express* train ride series from Woonsocket
- Work with the Woonsocket Parks and Recreation Department to bring the fleet of canoes and kayaks to Woonsocket to introduce children to their Blackstone River
- Celebrate *United Nations World Tourism Day*
- Implement the *SimpleView* website program in concert with CommerceRI
- Continue to build the *Blackstone Valley Tourism Network*
- Continue to push for shellfish experimentation in the Pawtucket River
- Improve the *Hachiko Monument* interpretation panel

- Complete the William Blackstone Monument interpretive panel in Pawtucket
- Manage the *Rhode Island Chinese Dragon Boat and Taiwan Day Festival* in conjunction with the RI Chinese community and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office, Boston
- Work with our local universities, educating students in tourism planning and development
- Develop the Blackstone River Expeditions program
- Work with the City of Central Falls in training their youth in the skills of paddling the Blackstone River
- Work to develop the Blackstone River canoe and kayak group rental program
- Repair the docking system at Central Falls Landing damaged due to river flooding in December of 2023 and January of 2024
- Work to establish a handicapped canoe and kayak launch at Central Falls Landing
- Support tourism development and planning for all Blackstone Valley communities
- Secure a location for the TENTERR program that the Tourism Council owns
- Collaborate with federal, state, local, non-profit and/or for-profit agencies for the benefit of tourism programs in the communities in the Blackstone Valley
- Participate in conferences and educational opportunities that benefit the mission of the Tourism Council and educate the staff to better serve the Blackstone Valley
- Develop additional interpretive educational programs for the *E/V Blackstone Valley Explorer*
- Continue to work with the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Inc. on programs that are mutually beneficial
- Promote the use of the River Classroom at Central Falls Landing
- Continue work to build the Keep the Blackstone Valley Beautiful as the Keep America Beautiful affiliate for Burrillville, Central Falls, East Providence, Cumberland, Glocester, Lincoln, North Smithfield, Pawtucket, Smithfield and Woonsocket
- Continue to work with the cities of Central Falls, Pawtucket and the town of Cumberland in managing the *Broad Street Regeneration 3.0* program
- Continue working with the Woonsocket Main Street Initiative
- Expand the *Blackstone Valley Visitor Information Distribution Services Program*
- Continue to implement recommendations of *.Sbest United Nations World Tourism Organization Certification*
- Continue to manage the *Blackstone Alert* program along the Blackstone River
- Maintain the *Sustainable Tourism Planning and Development Laboratory*
- Work with the Providence and Worcester Railroad to encourage wheelchair accessibility aboard the *Blackstone Valley Scenic Railroad* tours
- Work, in conjunction with the State of Rhode Island and the regional tourism district managers, to promote Rhode Island as a premiere visitor destination
- Work, in conjunction with the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor and the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce, to promote the Blackstone Valley as a destination
- Produce the Official Blackstone Valley Visitor Guide
- Enrich each of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council websites
- Expand the Blackstone Valley on-line shop
- Manage the Rhode Island Cherry Blossom Princess program
- Continue to support the Rhode Island State Society
- Continue the planting of the Cherry Tree Project along Roosevelt Avenue in Central Falls and Pawtucket.
- Expand the Group Tourism program

New Projects and Programs to consider

- Build on the *PictureBlackstone.com* web site - the digital photo archive of and for the Blackstone Valley
- Develop a Manufacturers' Tour of the Blackstone Valley.
- Build up the Blackstone Valley "Carbon Footprint Campaign" for visitors, businesses and residents to make the Blackstone Valley more environmentally conscious
- Develop "Sam Patch" Day in Pawtucket
- Develop the *Circle Blackstone* bike trail through our 10 communities
- Develop the new direct marketing campaign for events and branding campaign for the Blackstone Valley
- Expand the Blackstone Valley Heritage and Environmental Trust Fund to ensure the Blackstone Valley Explorer operations into the next decade
- Develop a "How to Discover the Blackstone River Valley" tour
- Build on the *Made in Blackstone Valley* campaign
- Continue to create a printed history of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
- Consider the building of a full-scale canal boat for the 200th anniversary of the Blackstone Canal
- Celebrate the Gold Award for the remaining Ghost Army soldiers at the Museum of Work and Culture

International Efforts in Promotion of Blackstone Valley

- Continue international development of tourism partnerships with England and Taiwan
- Participate in international promotion of the Blackstone Valley with Discover New England program
- Work with *BrandUSA* on the international tourism promotion opportunities
- Support the United Nations World Tourism Organization on their sustainable tourism initiatives
- Work with the Consul General of Japan in Boston on Japan/US programs
- Work with the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Boston on Taiwan/US programs
- Work with the RI Chinese Community on the development of China/US programs

Front-line Visitor Services

- Continue management of the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in Pawtucket
- Continue to coordinate the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management Visitor Services at the Blackstone River State Park when the building reopens in 2024
- Expand volunteer support at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in Lincoln
- Work to secure continued operations of the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in Pawtucket

Geo-tourism Planning

- Work with all Blackstone Valley communities and East Providence on Geo-tourism development planning

Legislative Actions

- Collaborate with tourism districts to maintain current or a better form of tourism district management that supports local community input in decision-making
- Continue to contract a government affairs agent to assist in matters relating to state legislative affairs
- Investigate the feasibility of creating a Southern New England Congressional Tourism Caucus

Organizational Improvements

- Keep current the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council Strategic Plan