

Blackstone Valley Tourism Council—Sustainable Tourism Lab

Blackstone Valley Visitor Center

Pawtucket, Rhode Island

May 10, 2019...V2: 6-2-19

Destination Development International - Roger Brooks

New Commons – Robert Leaver

Overview and What is Next

Roger Brooks presented a 90-minute presentation on his experience with hundreds of communities around the world in developing their “sense of place”. The presentation is available at SustainableTourismLab.com. After the talk, the group reconvened in the gallery for café conversations organized by geography or special interest. Even if you could not participate in the lab, the presentation is easily accessible and useful to you. You will get insights from it even not being there.

Many ideas that the communities suggested in the workshop could work for other communities as well

Café topics:

- Access to RI resources
- Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
- Bristol
- North Smithfield
- Pawtucket
- Broad Street: Pawtucket, Central Falls and Cumberland
- Norwich CT
- Woonsocket

Professional Development Priorities of all communities

Based on a review of all the cafe notes below by Robert Leaver, here are the 6 near-term priorities for all the groups to learn about:

- Determine what defines a center of a place (both a public place for people to experience community and a gathering place for special events)
- Declare what is unique about your place (what defines you)
- Establish wayfinding (signage that indicates where things are)
- Learn how to form and manage action teams

- Develop an attraction brochure and content for website
- Identify financing beyond the usual suspects, e.g. crowd source funding

These workshops would be designed and delivered to all groups at the same time by a trained expert over a 12 to 24-month period. Funding and or sponsorship resources must be secured.

Going forward: each group is asked to meet several times over the next 4 to 6 weeks to do 3 things:

- Validate that what is in the notes is what you meant to say
- Add to the list of proposed actions
- Place the actions into 3 buckets:
 - ✓ Near term: What is doable now without significant new resources or using existing resources that are reachable
 - ✓ Mid-term: What is doable by leveraging your network and adding some resources
 - ✓ Long-term: Doable long term, but requires significant new resources both money and know-how

Robert Leaver’s counsel is to start with what is doable to see results relatively quickly to generate momentum. The Tourism Council will reconvene the groups. The objective is to keep this going.

Access to RI Resources

- Re-establish a RI Main Street program with technical assistance. Need kid-friendly activities.
- Woonsocket wants breweries and artists. Local programming is vital. PawSox leaving Pawtucket is a major setback. Every municipality should have a downtown association. Wayfinding is the low hanging fruit. “Pawtucket Square” should be a plaza.

Blackstone Valley Tourism Council

- Wayfinding needs to be increased. Work with RIDOT, cities and towns and attractions to improve way finding
- Develop best-of brochures
- Develop target brochures, e.g., museums in Blackstone Valley
- Itinerary brochures for tours and travelers
- Install outdoor brochure display boxes in strategic locations
- The Tourism Council wants to be on your community committees – invite us
- The Tourism Council is committed to continuing what we started today

Bristol

Community Development

- Garner municipal support

- Programming of activities
- Wayfinding in town and to town

Other Actions

- Millennials engaged...high school and Roger Williams University
- Landlords vs. tenants (with 1/3, the landlords driving the remaining 2/3 of tenants)
- Wood Street/BIP Plaza (Brian Clark)
- What distinguishes us?
- Business hours extended and consistent
- Streetscape enhancements
- Art scene...call to artists...Art on the street
- More festivals at State Street, BIP plaza and State dock

North Smithfield

- Identify the brand
- No center of town and “need” to do it
- Food: Beef Barn, Farms, Wrights Dairy, Goodwin’s, Lucky Dog, Lindy’s
- Has a Drive-in theater
- History: mill village (now National Park with major improvements) Common. School house, mill architecture)
- Identify business hours (can they be longer than 5pm? Can we establish a time schedule better for consumers)
- Gathering place needs to be by retail areas. Identify villages and a gathering spot in each
- Fix our parks...Pacheco with new entrance in plans

Pawtucket

(There were two café conversations about Pawtucket. When the two groups meet as one, the action items should be integrated and add to as necessary).

Group one

- Revive the downtown and do it right. Make it pedestrian only in strategic places. Make Main Street a real destination. Improve traffic with a 2-way circle around the center. Make logistics a priority for businesses, e.g., deliveries
- Create public art on Route 95 – make the concrete an asset
- Better use of bike path in many ways...as a loop...walking bike path such as town landing
- Push AIR-BNB market and cultivate hotels...less on events and more on activities
- START the train station
- Bring zoning forward
- Do better welcoming to increase support

- Create the “Bucket List” ...make Pawtucket what is in the bucket by identifying what is unique about the city

Group two

- Program Slater Mill more fully with more hours
- Market the breweries and distilleries better
- Animate Main Street: farmers market, street cleaning, arts/bands, curb appeal, anchor tenets, analyze traffic as Main Street is used as a cut through (create 2-way traffic), widen sidewalks, trail walking, signage and direction
- Programming public spaces, downtown wayfinding, Restaurants, clean public restrooms, determine where the Google pin drops, which is the best to monetize
- Activate open/green spaces along Main Street, Roosevelt Avenue, Hodgson Park, Plaza at 175 Main Street, Veteran’s amphitheater
- Activate millennials
- Promote assets like Bikes and Beer
- Make downtown more walkable (more attractive to walkers); Street beautification with better connected walking paths/urban routes, music at amphitheater?
- Build the team of no more than 13 people with ½ under 35. Find the millennials. Better coordination with stakeholders in arts and business
- Address the potential of Apex
- Pawtucket is RI’s eastern welcome center with programming. Make products RI specific. A taste of RI center or welcome center (or both)
- Rezone Main Street with no traffic; instead a pedestrian mall with delivery trucks 6 to 10 am only
- Better signage both digital and physical. Better DOT signage with easy access to downtown on Route 95 before Exit 27
- What to do in Pawtucket. Area mailing: what to do with your visitors here in Pawtucket. Food and arts activities: inventory what is happening. Find ways to get the word out for both visitors and business to business. BVTC and Pawtucket Foundation events are not easily accessible

Broad Street: Pawtucket, Central Falls and Cumberland

- Ideas for the focus of the block:
- Pawtucket: let them focus on downtown. Health and beauty.
- Central Falls: international dining and culture (more than food). Hang out spot. Reveal the “hidden gems” behind the doors.
- Cumberland: kids/farms, parks, mini golf at Heritage Park, dog-park, coffee shops, antiques...start with the park, town hall and landing at Noshon Mill.
- Latino culture for whole section of Broad Street? Activities programming. Seek funding. Brand built on activities not tag line. Joint brochure or use website?
- Communicate details of RIDOT project of 16 million.
- Secure stable funding for administrator/coordinator of 75K. Articulate goals of effort/update plan.

- Choose 3 blocks (develop criteria first to make choices)
- Identify property owners in the 3 blocks; meet with each including Laura, planner/mayor of each municipality, Bob at the Tourism Council to discuss/orchestrate: open hours, windows (percent covered), benches and plants, changing displays and tenets ideas to recruit when vacant.

Norwich CT

- Context...Cluster of mills: Pawtucket, Jewitt City CT, and Norwich CT; Slater Mill and Rose Arts Festival.
- Recreational activities: Mohegan park, water sport activities, Apollo/bike and running, Water Fire to Fire, retail open 10 am to 8 pm, Lights
- Establish action teams
- Connect heritage sites and groups such as Native American restaurants and untold stories
- Wayfinding signage
- Marketing the top, 3, 5 or 7 attractions in a brochure of activities first listings
- Arts Council and arts
- Event organizations
- Determine neighborhood retail and destination retail
- Experiences/activities of 240 per year
- Food and breweries
- Parking and transit
- Gathering places
- Street closures that are permanent
- "Green up" downtown
- Programming overall
- Splash pad/ice skating
- Etsy downtown

Woonsocket, RI

- Beautification projects
- Central location for city at economic development website
- Market Square becomes a public plaza and define the connection to Monument Square
- Public surveys to attract new businesses
- Riverfront activities
- Redevelopment agency to acquire blighted property
- Activities: car show, farmers market, Movies on Main, beer festivals featuring local breweries
- Bypass downtown to one side for bike path and walk space
- Video clips to promote tourism
- Small business start-up program
- Improve sidewalks to be pedestrian friendly
- Reduce parking availability on Main Street

- Activate youth involved in the city: WHS, Beacon, Riversedge,
- Property owners buy into the vision
- We love Woony
- Wayfinding signs: Museum of Work and Culture, Bike Path, Stadium Theatre, City Hall and Kayaks/Boat ramp
- Build out what we want on Main Street: inviting commercial vendors, attract artists (arts space and galleries)