

# The Next **Ten Years**

An Amendment to the  
Cultural Heritage and  
Land Management Plan



**BLACKSTONE RIVER VALLEY**

National Heritage Corridor Commission

# Table of Contents

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

<b>I.</b>	<b>BACKGROUND</b>	
	<b>Overview</b>	<b>5</b>
	The National Significance of the Blackstone Valley	5
	The Valley's Resources	6
	The Commission and the Heritage Corridor Experiment	7
	A Regional Vision	8
	A Strategic Approach	8
	Why Another Ten Years?	9
	Congressional Direction for the Next Ten Years	9
	<b>The Cultural Heritage and Land Management Plan</b>	<b>9</b>
	Objectives	9
	The Action Agenda for the First Ten Years	11
	How the Plan was Developed	11
<b>II.</b>	<b>THE NEXT TEN YEARS</b>	
	<b>The Challenges:</b>	
	Responding to the Past, Present & Future	18
	<b>The Core Commitments</b>	<b>19</b>
	The Story of the American Industrial Revolution	19
	Preserve and Enhance Valley Communities	20
	Balance Conservation and Growth	20
	Promote River Recovery	20
	<b>Integrating the New Communities into the Action Agenda</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>III.</b>	<b>EXPERIENCING THE HERITAGE CORRIDOR</b>	
	<b>History, Preservation &amp; Partnerships</b>	<b>25</b>
	<b>The Unveiling of a National Story</b>	<b>27</b>
	<b>The Story: From Birth to Decline to Renewal</b>	<b>29</b>
	Chapter 1: Birth of the American Industrial Revolution	29
	Chapter 2: The Early Transformations	31
	Chapter 3: From Farm to Factory	33
	Chapter 4: The Flowering of the Industry	34
	Chapter 5: The Enduring Legacy	35
<b>IV.</b>	<b>STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT</b>	
	<b>The Development Strategy:</b>	
	How the Core Commitments Will Be Achieved	39
	The Heritage Infrastructure	41
	Heritage Programming	42
	Strategic Design and Planning Assistance	43
	Blackstone Valley Institute	43
	River Recovery and Recreational Development	45
	A Transitional Era for the Commission	46
	Summary of the Ten-Year Program Budget Projections	47
	<b>APPENDIX</b>	
	A. Environmental and Historical Compliance	49
	B. Natural Resources Inventory Executive Summary	50
	C. The New Communities Welcome Workshops	55
	D. Legislation: P.L. 99-647; P.L. 101-441; P.L. 104-333	60
	<b>CORRIDOR PARTNERSHIP CREDITS</b>	<b>65</b>



# Executive Summary

In 1790 Samuel Slater began production at the first water powered cotton-textile factory on the Blackstone River in what is today the City of Pawtucket. After almost two centuries of obscurity, the story of the Birth of the American Industrial Revolution, of America's "hardest working river" that powered that revolution, and the communities of the Blackstone Valley where the revolution took root and spread across the nation, is being told.

Spurred by local recognition of the story's importance, and the value of preserving and interpreting the Valley's historic and natural resources, Congress created the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor as an ambitious experiment in 1986. Ten years later, the experiment was declared a success when Congress voted to extend the life of the Corridor and its governing Commission for a second 10 years and expand the Corridor from 20 to 24 communities. This document constitutes a supplement to the Commission's Cultural Heritage and Land Management Plan: it reaffirms basic goals and commitments of the last 10 years and calls attention to important work which remains undone.



*At the heart of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor's commitment to promote regional responsiveness to economic, environmental and cultural issues, which cross community boundaries, is its dedication to collaborative projects that build partnerships through voluntary means.*

The new communities that were successful in their efforts to join the Heritage Corridor—the rest of the City of Worcester and the Town of Leicester in Massachusetts and the Towns of Burrillville, Glocester and Smithfield in Rhode Island—brought with them the headwaters of the Blackstone River, important elements of the Valley's story, and a grass-roots enthusiasm for the Corridor's mission. These communities also brought a commitment to regional awareness and responsibility, which now characterizes the entire Blackstone Valley.

Over the first seven months of 1997, the Commission met with a broad spectrum of the Valley community to brainstorm and seek technical assistance. The Commission identified the core challenges and opportunities that would guide its efforts over the next decade and articulated a set of commitments and a strategy for achieving those commitments.

After extensive discussion, the Commission adopted a set of draft Core Commitments which build upon the work accomplished in the first 10 years and reflect the work still to be done:

- **Tell the story of the American Industrial Revolution to a national audience and shape a visitor experience which makes this story accessible to large numbers of people.**
- **Promote preservation and new life for the Valley's older village centers, mills, and other historic resources.**
- **Assist local communities in balancing conservation and growth.**
- **Reaffirm an active commitment to improving the health of the river system.**

The Commission then adopted a draft Development Strategy which is intended to respond to these Commitments and to leave behind a legacy of sustainable development projects and programs. The elements of this Strategy constitute the basis for a requested Congressional budget authorization of \$5,000,000 to be matched by \$10,000,000 of investment from a variety of sources. The key elements include:



*With input from a broad cross section of the Corridor's population, the Commission identified four action agenda priorities for the next ten years:*

- *Telling the story of the American Industrial Revolution to a national audience;*
- *Promoting the preservation and revitalization of historic Corridor communities;*
- *Balancing conservation and growth;*
- *and Improving the health of the Blackstone's riverways.*

**Heritage Infrastructure** — the signs, trails, gateways, exhibits, and other elements which together tell the story.

**Heritage Programming** — the educational programs, living history, arts and crafts, festivals, an annual conference on the American Industrial Revolution, "teaching teachers" programs, tourism development and marketing, and other elements which go hand in hand with heritage infrastructure.

**Strategic Design and Planning Assistance** — technical assistance as requested by partners to guide new investment that preserves historic resources, helps communities manage growth and conserve natural open space, and responds to opportunities which preserve the Valley's special character.

**Blackstone Valley Institute** — an idea for a resource center that grew from what people in the Valley wanted for bringing citizens, local officials, the business community and others together to respond to critical issues which shape the Valley's quality of life and its ability to preserve and interpret its historic and natural resources.

**Preservation and Enhancement Programs** — targeted funds to support local preservation and revitalization efforts.

**River Recovery and Recreational Development** — a broad-based effort to promote the health and recreational value of the Valley's riverways.

**A Transitional Era for the Commission**— an examination of options for a self-sustaining management framework to continue the mission of preserving and interpreting the Valley's cultural landscape beyond the Commission's current federal status, should that change.

This is a dynamic plan that outlines guiding principles while recognizing the need to accommodate changing circumstances. The Commission looks to the future and its partners to help complete this agenda.



# 1

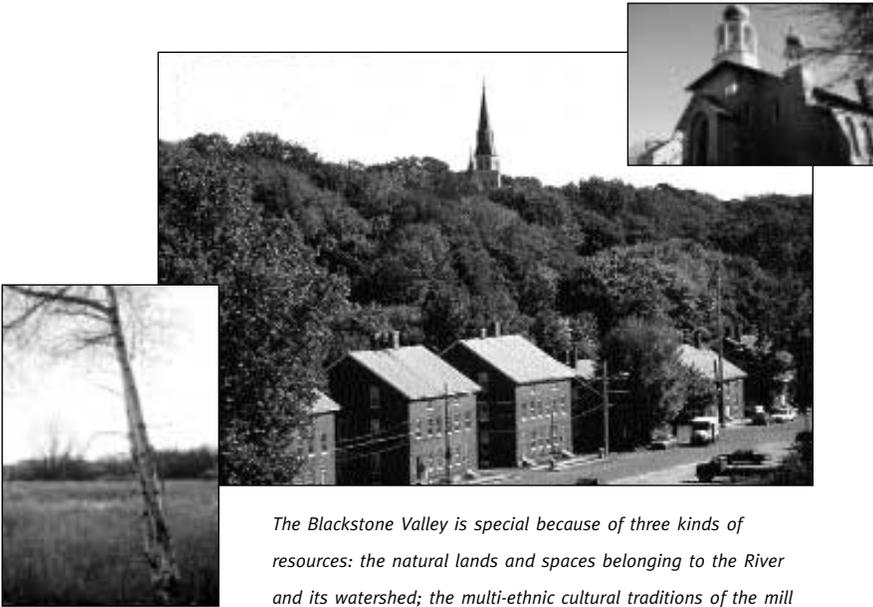
---

# Background

## OVERVIEW

### THE NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BLACKSTONE VALLEY

The Valley of the Blackstone River, which drains south-central Massachusetts and northern Rhode Island, had long been recognized by historians as the birthplace of American Industry. In the 1790's, Samuel Slater, a textile maker in Pawtucket, RI, first succeeded in adapting English machine technology to cotton-yarn manufacturing powered by water wheels. What had hitherto been a small cottage industry of hand-made products soon became America's first factory-based industry of mass production. Gradually, this radical new "Rhode Island System of Manufacturing," which created whole new communities dedicated to a single manufactory (textiles in the Blackstone Valley), spread rapidly, leading by the mid 19th century to profound changes in the cultural, political, economic, demographic and physical characteristics of the new nation. Strangely, this nationally significant story — an essential element in what is unique about American history — has been largely restricted only to industrial historians and local residents who had grown up recognizing their Valley as a special place.



*The Blackstone Valley is special because of three kinds of resources: the natural lands and spaces belonging to the River and its watershed; the multi-ethnic cultural traditions of the mill communities; and the historic character of the mill villages and hilltop villages.*

### THE VALLEY'S RESOURCES

Historians teach that the significance of some regions is defined by their natural resources (the coal-mining regions of Pennsylvania, for example), others by their cultural and historic resources (the old seaports of New England are another). The Blackstone Valley, by contrast, had been defined by all three. Its unique natural resource was the River and its watershed. Its unique cultural resource was a multi-ethnic tradition of investor-owned town life dedicated to textile production. And its unique historical resource was the physical form of the mill villages, which line the river banks with their complex of mills and worker houses. These stand in marked contrast to the rural hill towns surrounding the Valley where farmers once produced the goods to feed the mill workers below.

The Cultural Heritage and Land Management Plan (Management Plan) frames the significance of the Valley's historical resources in this way: "The Blackstone River Valley is one of the nation's richest and best preserved repositories of landscapes, structures and sites that recall a neglected era of the American past: the Age of Industry." As the need for labor expanded through the 19th century, immigrants from many areas of Europe settled in the formerly Yankee towns. Many brought traditional folkways with them, further enriching and

deepening the cultural resources of the Valley. The natural resources of the region provided both the setting and the raw materials which sustained the Valley's economic and cultural development through its industrial era. In this inter-woven tapestry of natural and man-made forces, the Blackstone River remains the starting point. Its seemingly endless power to turn the water wheels of industry, quench the thirst of thousands who came to the Valley for work, and supply the myriad needs of textile production is central to understanding why this Valley made its mark on American history.

**Historical Resources** — The Management Plan characterizes the Blackstone Valley as a "unified working landscape of scenic mill villages, commercial town centers, rural open space and urban areas." Small mill communities clustered along the riverways, such as Slatersville in North Smithfield, are still illustrative of the Rhode Island System where whole villages were financed by a small group of investors. Housing, schools, libraries and churches all were built around the workplace that attracted families for employment in the mill. Slater Mill, the earliest site of textile manufacturing in the Valley, is well preserved, although the original mill village has evolved into the City of Pawtucket. Examples of early industrial villages which populate the Valley, can be readily contrasted with later 19th century industrial communities, such as Ashton, which are characterized by massive mill structures whose size responded to the growing scale of late 19th century production. With the rapid growth of industry and changing technology, transportation systems united and transformed the Valley. Colonial roads and early turnpikes, such as the still extant Central Turnpike in Northbridge and Sutton, were overlaid by railroads and highway systems spanning more than two centuries. Intact sections of the Blackstone Canal and Towpath lace through state park land in both states. By mid-century, the Providence and Worcester Railroad had eclipsed the Blackstone Canal as the principal means of commercial transportation in the Valley.

# Background

**Cultural Resources** — In the Rhode Island System of Manufacturing, classes and cultures were separated in the development of neighborhoods such as Worcester's Green Island and Quinsigamond Village neighborhoods. Traditions and cultural identity were reinforced by establishment of churches, social halls and restaurants. French Canadians, Germans, Swedes, English, Irish, Dutch and many more groups came to the Blackstone Valley, leaving some part of their cultural mark on the landscape or folkway traditions. One of the more compelling interpretations of this story is contained in the exhibits featured in the new Museum of Work and Culture in Woonsocket, RI.

**Natural Resources** — Despite generations of development and change, the Blackstone River Valley hosts a rich array of natural resources which are evident in its rivers and tributaries, wetlands and rocky outcroppings, and forests and fields. The Blackstone River is the most significant natural resource in the region, linking two states and 24 communities by a natural system with a national story. Called "the hardest working river in America" at its zenith, the Blackstone was once harnessed by more than 40 dams over its 46-mile length. Over time, these impoundments created marsh and wetlands that are now an integral part of the region's natural ecosystem. State parks and forests also protect significant areas of both historic and natural resources. A developing system of trails and the Blackstone Bikeway will provide important connections to natural areas in the future.

The future of the Valley's natural resources has been determined important enough by Congress that the 1996 reauthorization act has required the Commission to complete a Natural Resources Inventory and Assessment as a stand-alone technical report. The Inventory, whose Executive Summary is appended to this document, will help direct the Commission's environmental agenda for the next ten years. Indeed, the well-being of the



*The Natural Resources Inventory and Assessment, mandated by Congress as part of the Commission's 1996 reauthorization, will direct the environmental agenda of the Commission for the next ten years; its Executive Summary is appended to this report.*

Blackstone and its river basin lands have been judged so important that the process of River Recovery has been selected as one of the four Core Commitments on the Commission's working agenda for the decade ahead.

## **THE COMMISSION AND THE HERITAGE CORRIDOR "EXPERIMENT"**

When Congress established the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor in 1986, it established a bi-state, federally-appointed commission of local and state representatives to help preserve and interpret the unique resources and qualities that made the Blackstone Valley significant both to the nation and to its residents. When the Commission was established in 1986, it was part of a then novel idea to enlist the National Park Service in a partnership dedicated to helping states and localities conserve their special regions - those places where historical and natural characteristics had left their mark on American history. At the time, this was an ambitious experiment; no one knew whether it would work or not.

*Called the "hardest working river in America" because of the countless mills which lined its banks and tributaries, the Blackstone was controlled by over 40 dams, whose man-made impoundments created ponds and wetlands now considered part of the Valley's natural ecosystem.*





*One of the Commission's principal objectives is to help residents envision their Valley as a regional place linked by a common set of economic, natural and cultural resources.*

## A REGIONAL VISION

The experiment was based upon a fresh approach to thinking about regional places. Rather than conceiving of the Valley as a set of self-contained, independent municipalities divided by political boundaries, the Commission began to help residents envision the Valley as a regional entity: an interdependent place linked by a common set of economic, natural and cultural resources. If approached as an inter-connected system, this new approach might engender new attitudes that would help revitalize the Valley as a place to visit, live, work and invest. But the vision for the Corridor as a whole is much larger than what the Commission, by itself, will accomplish. Unlike traditional National Parks, the Corridor Commission did not, nor does it now, own land, control significant sites, or have regulatory powers. The vision began to make a tangible impact on public and private-sector actions throughout the Valley. Many local leaders, private investors and residents began to think in regional terms, and to assign a higher value on preserving and interpreting the Valley's historic, cultural and natural resources.



*Over the next ten years, the Commission will remain committed to its priority goal of regional land-use management through ongoing initiatives such as educational workshops for developers and local officials, public forums for controversial issues, and longer-range initiatives such as planning along the Rt. 146 corridor.*

## A STRATEGIC APPROACH

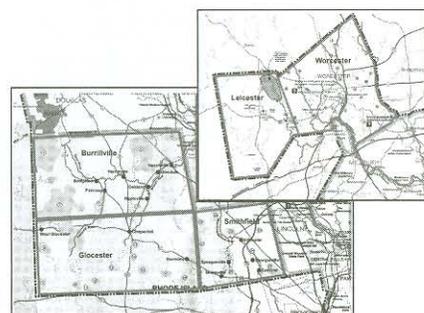
The Commission's most effective tools in nurturing this regional attitude have been three fold: public education, which reaches out to the grass-roots level; partnerships, which pool local and national resources; and targeted investments, which focus scarce public and private dollars on highly visible projects that reinforce a sense of the Valley's national heritage story and build local pride and enthusiasm. As individuals, the Commissioners are most effective as key players who influence the direction of the Valley. They bring their combined

agendas from their normal pursuits to the table, focusing and enhancing activities through the objectives of the agencies or interests they represent. As the Commission heads into its next decade, these tools and individual Commissioner's efforts will remain at the heart of the Heritage Corridor implementation strategy for the future.

## WHY ANOTHER TEN YEARS?

In the mid 1990s, with the Blackstone Commission's federal authorization set to phase-out in 1996, not only did the existing 20 communities of the Heritage Corridor recognize that the Commission's real work had just begun, but four additional towns and the remainder of the City of Worcester sought to join the Corridor. To address this demand, the National Park Service conducted a Boundary Study in 1995 to determine the feasibility of extending the Corridor's boundaries and enlisting additional municipal partners. The result was a groundswell of local support. This display of ongoing determination from so many new and existing partners led Congress to conclude that the heritage area "experiment" was indeed working. In November 1996, Congress authorized the Commission to continue its mission for another ten years and add four new communities: the Towns of Burrillville, Glocester and Smithfield in Rhode Island, and the Town of Leicester in Massachusetts, and the rest of the City of Worcester.

*Four new communities were added to the Heritage Corridor by Congress in 1996 including: Burrillville, Glocester and Smithfield, RI, and Leicester, MA. A fifth municipality, the City of Worcester, sought to have the balance of its area north of Quinsigamond Village added.*



# Background

## CONGRESSIONAL DIRECTION FOR THE NEXT TEN YEARS

With reauthorization, Congress gave a clear message to the Commission - stay the course! It basically said the Commission should not alter significantly the Cultural Heritage and Land Management Plan approved in 1990. The legislation did mandate the Commission to develop a "revised" plan within one year of enactment of P.L. 104-333. This revision or supplement to the Management Plan shall:

- "address the boundary change"
- include a Natural Resource Inventory
- develop a 10-year development plan outlining "resource protection needs and projects critical to maintaining or interpreting the distinctive character of the Corridor"; as well as a work program that reflects the authorized \$5 million and the partnerships necessary to carry out the plan.

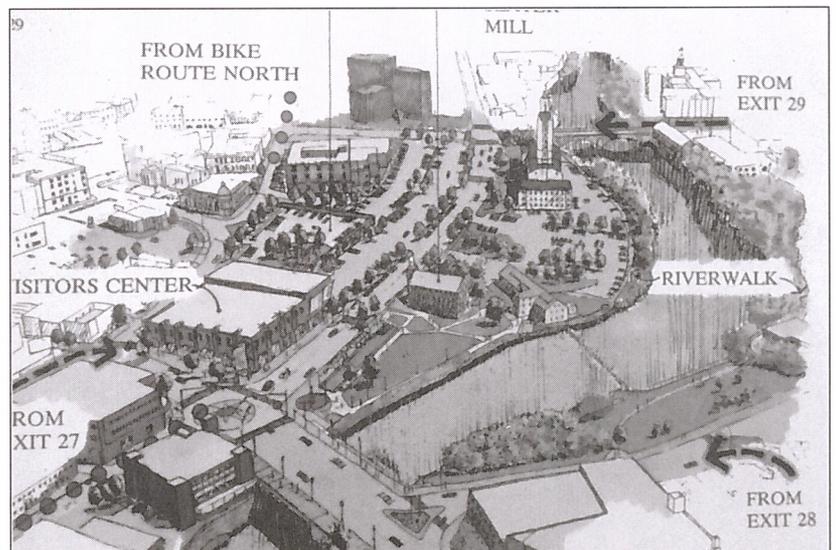
This document, The Next Ten Years, is meant as a companion piece to the Management Plan: it reaffirms the commitments of the last 10 years and describes an emerging Commission focus and strategy for the next ten years, calling attention to important work which remains undone. The Next Ten Years is a dynamic plan which provides the guidance of basic principles while recognizing the need to grow over the coming years in order to address changed circumstances. Not every idea or proposal which appears in this supplement may be accomplished, and some proposals undoubtedly will change in light of further examination, additional information, and new ideas.

## CULTURAL HERITAGE & LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN OBJECTIVES

Approved by the Secretary of the Interior in 1990, The Cultural Heritage and Land Management Plan has served as the Commission's blueprint for action. Several overriding goals from that document continue to direct the Commission's work then as now:

- **PROTECT** the Valley's historic, cultural and natural resources in an integrated manner;
- **EDUCATE** and **INTERPRET** the Corridor's importance to the people of the Valley and its visitors;
- **FOSTER** specific activities that tap the Valley's unique resources and invite people to enjoy and celebrate them;
- **STIMULATE** the research necessary to understand the Valley's role in the American Industrial Revolution and the lessons it holds for our times; and;
- **COORDINATE** and **ENCOURAGE** all the partnerships that will be necessary to achieve these goals.

It should be noted that the Management Plan, which was appended by a series of five reports, including a Historic Resources Inventory, Design Guidelines and Standards, an Interpretive Plan, a Land Use Management Plan and an Economic Assessment, is now recognized as an early national model for the "heritage area" experiment.



*The working agenda of the Commission remains comprehensive for the next ten years: continue to reinvest in the Valley's historic, cultural and natural resources; tell the industrial history story to a national audience; build local constituencies through heritage partnerships; carry out demonstration projects that encourage those partners; and continue coordination between state and federal agencies which share aspects of its mission.*

# The Action Agenda for the First Ten Years

Over the past ten years, the work of the Commission has been broad-based, drawing enthusiastic participation from local leaders from all walks of life, such as elected officials, local community advocates, the business community, historic preservationists, river stewards and other constituencies. The Commission's agenda has remained comprehensive: helping reverse a long-standing lack of re-investment in the Valley's historic, cultural and natural resources; launching a process of telling the Valley's unique story; cultivating local constituencies who would become the building blocks for effective partnerships; carrying out demonstration projects to encourage local initiatives; and enhancing coordination between state and federal agencies whose missions also address regional concerns.

At the heart of the Plan is a series of "integrated, linked actions" which were intended collectively to launch the Corridor concept across the Valley, integrating its full range of historic, cultural, and natural resources. Equally important, all of these projects were intended to stimulate spin-off activities-opening the River to recreation, for example, would lead to a greater appreciation of the Valley's natural resources, helping to build coalitions to enhance the riverway and support actions for a cleaner Blackstone River.

The Action Agenda for the First Ten Years is organized into seven key areas. The following is a summarized record of past accomplishments, noting areas where the Commission needs to continue or augment its work.

## 1. COORDINATION AND CONSISTENCY

Corridor Action Teams were intended to "make expertise available to communities or organizations who [were] ready to move ahead with activities on the Plan's Action Agenda....". This initiative evolved into Cooperative Agreements with key sites, such as Slater Mill Historic Site, and riverway projects, such as the Fisherville Dam; and into other highly targeted assistance programs which will continue with the Plan Amendment.

Valley-Wide Identity Programs included the development of a Corridor-wide identity system whereby design standards have been incorporated into signs, printed materials and exhibits. Over 200 signs have been planted along highways that guide visitors into our communities and heritage sites. Tour brochures, events calendars and guides assist with marketing the Valley and informing people about the many places and events to experience. The Commission publishes the "picks of the week" in partnership with the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council to over 80 media outlets, informing them of activities and events taking place in the Valley. A distribution system coordinated by tourism agencies and the Commission gathers information from heritage-related sites in the Corridor and offers free distribution to 100 sites in the region.

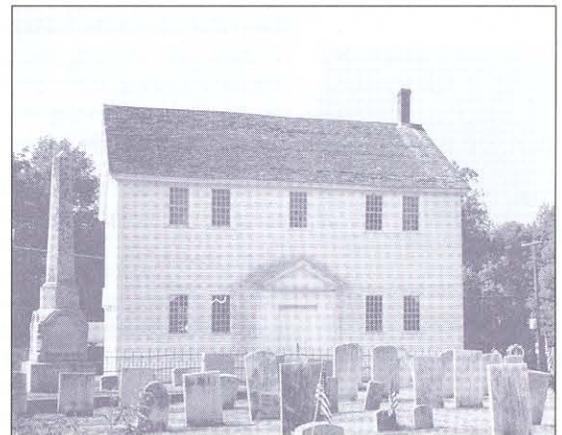
The Good News initiative was targeted at getting the "news" out to the public regarding the work of the Commission and its partners. Many successful preservation projects, which the Commission has helped sponsor or support, like the restoration of the E.N. Jenckes Store in Douglas, have been publicized; extensive networking to

spread news of partnership successes has also occurred through Corridor Commissioners, who have extended their commitment to the Corridor in other roles, such as leadership in the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council; recognition of these partnership efforts will continue to be important to the Corridor-wide strategy.

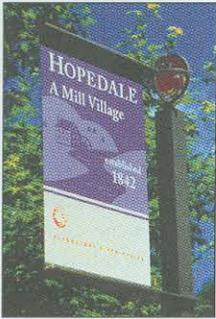
## 2. HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Inventory historical and archaeological resources: Some of the leading accomplishments included the listing of the Blackstone Canal on the National Register of Historic Places and measured drawing documentation of Slater Mill by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) of the National Park Service. The Commission will continue to champion National Register listings and development of local inventories. All Rhode Island communities have historic surveys complete; a goal for the Commission during the next ten years is to have all Massachusetts communities within the Corridor complete their surveys.

Preserve key historic districts, properties and sites that define the character of the Valley: Some of the key historic properties listed in the original Plan, which the Commission has assisted in preserving, include Waters Farm, where a living history program is being developed; the Blackstone Canal, where efforts at stabilization and interpretation have occurred at the Kelly House in Blackstone River State Park in Lincoln; Slater Mill, through programming at the future visitor center, which allows better preservation efforts at the mill site; and Chestnut Hill Meeting House, which is continuing preservation work. Other historic properties, which have been restored or where ongoing preservation activity exists, include the Uxbridge Common, the Hannaway Blacksmith Shop in Lincoln, the East Blackstone Meeting



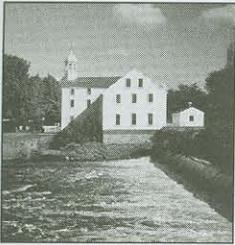
Millville's Chestnut Hill Meeting House, one of the important historic properties in the Corridor, was assisted by the Commission in its preservation under the 1990 Management Plan.



Over 200 new signs have been installed throughout the Corridor as part of the Commission's corridor-wide signage system; dozens more are expected in the future throughout the new communities.



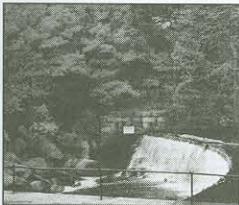
Through the assistance of the Commission, Slater Mill has been carefully documented by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) through archival photographs and measured drawings which become part of the Library of Congress collection.



*The Action Plan for the first ten years set the stage for three new Visitor Centers now under development: the Pawtucket facility adjacent to Slater Mill, the Museum of Work and Culture in Woonsocket, and River Bend Farm in Uxbridge.*



*National Park Service Rangers serve as some of the Heritage Corridor's best interpreters through their tours, talks and programs.*



*While significant achievements in open space protection have taken place, most notably in the Blackstone Gorge and portions of Valley Falls Marsh, open space conservation will continue to be a top priority of the Commission's action plan over the next ten years.*

House, the Arcade Building in Blackstone, the Millbury railroad depot, E.N. Jenckes Store in Douglas, the Blackstone River Theatre in Lonsdale, River Bend Farm in Uxbridge, and the Lincoln Textile Building and Lincoln Street houses in Woonsocket. Other properties, which remain on the Commission's priority list, include Moffett Mill, which has been stabilized but needs restoration, the Mammoth Mill ruin, still unprotected, and the Fisherville Mill.

Provide professional planning assistance to Corridor towns and cities: The Commission has witnessed mixed success with efforts to help Valley municipalities implement local preservation zoning. In Chepachet, RI, for example, efforts were successful in passing zoning to protect that historic village, while in Woonsocket and Central Falls historic district zoning has been rescinded.

Provide information to the public about professional assistance, grants and guidelines available for historic preservation: While incentive programs for historic building rehabilitation, like low-interest revolving loans, remain a goal of the Commission, it has been instrumental in helping find preservation grants for historic properties in the Corridor, such as the Federated Church in Blackstone and the E.N. Jenckes Store in East Douglas.

### 3. INTERPRETATION

Seek the development of museums/information centers in Pawtucket, Woonsocket, Uxbridge and Worcester: The Commission and its various partners has successfully initiated the development and design of museums and/or visitor centers in three of these four communities: in Pawtucket at Slater Mill, in Woonsocket at the Museum of Work and Culture, and in Uxbridge at River Bend Farm. A key visitor center for Worcester, which is still in the planning stages, is expected to be developed in the vicinity of Hurley Square in the Quinsigamond Village area. Ongoing efforts to complete the visitor center in Pawtucket remain one of the highest Commission priorities.

Design and develop permanent, traveling and wayside interpretive exhibits: Consistent interpretive design standards for wayside interpretation has been developed by the Commission. To date, several sites have been equipped with wayside interpretive signs including the Little Red Shop, Slater Mill, the Willard House and Clock Museum, the Chestnut Hill Meeting House, River Bend Farm, and Plummer's Landing. Other exhibits have been developed at sites like Hayward Landing in Douglas where an interior display was created in the common area of this restored mill.

Design, produce and distribute interpretive materials, such as maps, guidebooks and brochures, that describe the historic, cultural, natural and recreational resources of the Corridor: A family of brochures, including Ranger activities, walking or driving tour brochures have been produced and distributed for several Corridor communities. Individual brochures are underway to be completed for each of the original twenty communities; at least four more are planned for new towns added to the Corridor.

Train volunteer interpreters: A Volunteers In Parks program has been established to complement and augment National Park Service rangers' interpretation of Valley sites and stories. The program is expected to grow through emerging initiatives such as the Blackstone Valley Institute, a learning program to include training new volunteers.

### 4. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

Improve the water quality of the Blackstone River: The Commission's Environmental Subcommittee has worked closely with federal and state regulatory agencies and property owners in both states to ensure a more consistent water flow; support has been given to the Friends of the Blackstone, the Massachusetts Audubon Society, and others for river cleanups; the Commission participated in the project scoping for the cleanup and remediation of the Peterson-Puritan Superfund site among others; the Army Corps of Engineers, in consultation with the Commission and other partners, has recently completed a feasibility study for restoring the River (and is now pursuing federal and state funds to begin the restoration process); but significant additional progress will be necessary to complete this long-term task.

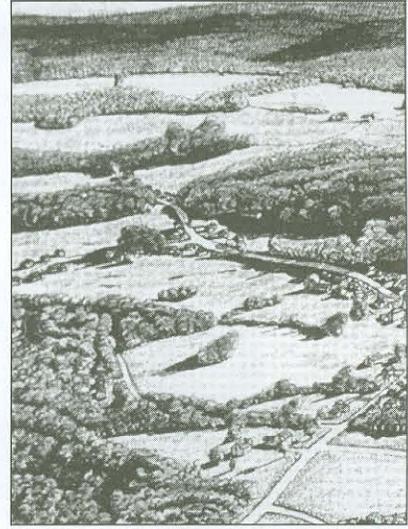
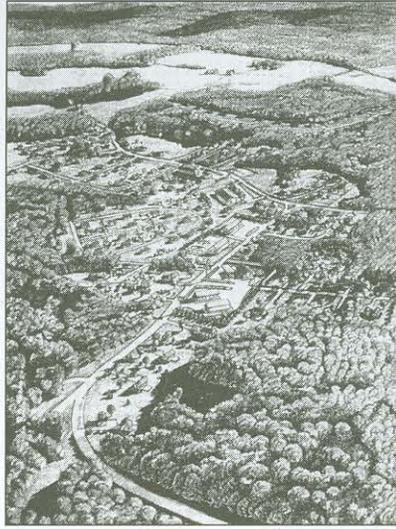
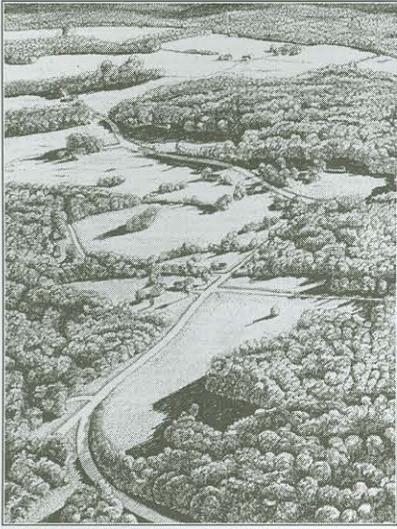
Identify natural sites that are threatened, in need of action or assistance, or important to the completion or enhancement of state heritage parks within the Corridor: This is an ongoing task which has resulted in critical lands being added to the Blackstone Gorge Bi-State Park and a commitment by leaders in Massachusetts to establish a greenway along the Blackstone as part of the Massachusetts Turnpike/Rt. 146 corridor. Additional areas for protection are recommended in the recently completed Natural Resources Inventory and Assessment.

Protect open space within the Corridor: This recommendation has led to protection of Freegrace Marble Farm in Sutton, the historic quarry and kiln in Lime Rock, and the expansion of Heritage Parks in both states; it has also led to Commission support for groups like the Metacomet Land Trust, and the preservation of special natural areas, such as the Blackstone Gorge (which emerged as the first bi-state park) and the Valley Falls Marsh in Cumberland and Lincoln (substantial portions of which are now protected). Open space protection, however, will continue to be an important goal in the updated action strategy.

Support state, local, private, and individual efforts to enhance the environment: The Commission has co-sponsored special environmental events, such as the annual Environmental Congress, held by the Massachusetts Audubon Society's Broad Meadow Brook Wildlife Sanctuary; produced the conceptual design guidebook, *Visions for the Future* in collaboration with the Northern Rhode Island Economic Development Partnership, for 20 sites in eight communities in northern Rhode Island, which envisioned creative ways to focus development and preserve natural areas; and established an annual award in conjunction with the Environmental Congress to honor local individuals or groups whose work has improved natural systems. In addition to these efforts, the Commission remains committed through its proposed Institute program to working with existing municipal Conservation Commissions to protect natural resources.

### 5. LAND USE MANAGEMENT

Integrate the Corridor's existing Management Plan into ongoing state and regional planning efforts: To date, the State of Rhode Island has incorporated the Management Plan into its State Guide Plan, and six of eight original Rhode Island communities added "Heritage Corridor" elements to their local comprehensive plans.



*In the past, the Commission has provided land-use planning and design assistance to numerous Corridor communities, including Millbury, Douglas, Slatersville, Mendon, Blackstone, Hopedale, Lincoln, Pawtucket and Grafton. Six communities also participated in the "Visions for the Future," a conceptual design book for urban and rural sites.*

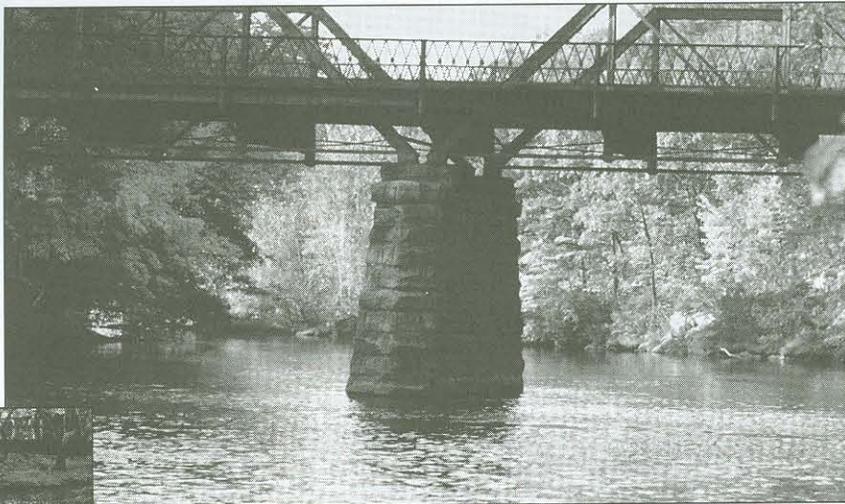
Provide information to the public about good land-use practices: The Commission has provided land-use planning and design assistance to several communities throughout the Corridor, including Millbury, Douglas, Slatersville, Mendon, Blackstone, Hopedale, Lincoln and Pawtucket, and collaborated with Grafton officials in creating design review guidelines for new development, as well as with six municipalities that participated in the Visions for the Future conceptual design guidebook. The Commission also helped sponsor a design charrette workshop in Woonsocket for the tax credit rehabilitation of 11 worker houses on Lincoln Street, and has held several public meetings for important issues, such as the Douglas Landfill, and a continuing gravel extraction use along the River in Cumberland and Woonsocket. In the future, the Commission expects to continue this mission in several ways through its Institute program, co-sponsoring land-use planning workshops with Valley communities, sponsoring workshops for local builders and developers to discuss site planning and design issues; recognizing the work of developers and builders and public officials which advances the goals of protecting and improving the Corridor's physical integrity; and developing an educational videotape targeted for decision-makers and community leaders that presents information about land use issues and tools for balancing conservation and growth.

Identify and inventory Corridor resources and conditions: The Commission has developed a Historic Resources Inventory and, most recently, a Natural Resource Inventory which are valuable reports used as a basis for action in the Valley. As dynamic collections of information, the inventories will periodically be updated and evaluated. Land information and site conditions along the Blackstone River have also been inventoried as a resource to be used by the Commission and other partners to help establish a Greenway along the River corridors and develop river access points.



*While the Army Corps of Engineers recently completed a feasibility study for restoring the River, significant additional work remains ahead, including the identification of federal and state funds to carry out the process.*

Enhance the character of the Valley: This ongoing effort has been fulfilled in numerous ways through direct technical assistance to Valley communities, and through the Commission's coordinating responsibilities in Section 9 (requiring Federal or federally-funded actions to be consistent with Corridor goals) of the original legislation establishing the Corridor. The Stone Arch Bridge in Slatersville will remain as a vital element in this premier mill village due to successful coordination and commitment on the part of the Town of North Smithfield, Polytop Corporation, Rhode Island Department of Transportation, Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission, and the Corridor Commission. Similarly, significant characteristics of the mill villages of Ashton and Berkeley were preserved and enhanced through careful consideration of improvements along Mendon Road (Route 122) in Cumberland. Exercising



*Developing River Access Areas provides recreational and educational opportunities that create awareness of environmental protection issues*

Section 9 authority will continue as an effective way to influence capital improvement projects for consistency with Corridor goals. Assistance with land use plans, as in Mendon, provided citizens an opportunity to explore the special character of the town in relation to development patterns and current zoning by-laws. Technical assistance for preserving community character has been built into the Commission's annual work program.

## 6. RECREATION

Complete or enhance state and local parks and forests within the Corridor: Several hundreds of acres of state and local parkland have been added over the past ten years. Remarkable efforts on the part of Cumberland have resulted in the creation of Valley Falls Heritage Park, Fanning Wilderness Area and William Blackstone Memorial Park in Lonsdale. Regional and national conservation organizations, like Metacomet Land Trust and The Nature Conservancy have preserved farmland and sensitive ecosystems, while providing recreational enjoyment too. With the active support of the Corridor Commission, Massachusetts DEM, The Conservation Fund, and the surrounding communities, additional lands around the Blackstone Gorge have been added. Continuing to protect land north of the Gorge to Millville center remains an important Commission goal.

Implement construction, maintenance and landscaping projects that provide greater public use and access to the River: Canoe and river access facilities, trails along the Canal and Towpath, the Blackstone River Bikeway and outdoor exhibits are all underway to create a more public river experience. Canoe access sites like those at River Island Park in Woonsocket and Plummer's Landing in Northbridge allow sections of the river to be navigated by even novice canoeists. At least eight more of these sites are being designed along the Blackstone through the Commission's river access program. Seven miles of towpath, in Rhode Island and Massachusetts state parks, are currently accessible and navigable to the public. Through achievable land protection strategies and minor improvements, at least 12 more miles could be made accessible for public enjoyment. Collaborating with various partners and state DEM's to

accomplish this in the next ten years is a high priority for the Commission. Work with the Rhode Island and Massachusetts DEM's to launch the Providence-to-Worcester Blackstone River Bikeway is expected to be completed in 2002 (construction of the Rhode Island section begins in the Fall of 1997); a three-mile section, largely in Worcester, will soon be built as part of the new Massachusetts Turnpike/Rt. 146 interchange.

Produce recreational publications: A canoe guide for exploring the Blackstone River, quarterly calendars of events, and recreational guides for exploring portions of the Canal made their debut during the Commission's first decade. This program will continue as more recreational sites and opportunities are made available.

## 7. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Develop an economic development strategy for the Valley: While the development of a comprehensive strategy still remains ahead for the Commission, it has co-sponsored, in partnership with Historic Massachusetts, Inc., a "Red Brick Elephants" Conference, which explored many of the long-term issues connected with adapting the Valley's existing industrial infrastructure to new uses, such as effective or innovative ways to cleanup and re-use abandoned mills. Participation in regional economic development initiatives with both the Massachusetts and Rhode Island Chambers of Commerce have reinforced many of the Commission's objectives. It has also joined the Northern Rhode Island Economic Development Partnership and the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce in regional strategic planning which has built on the Valley's historic and natural resources. Partnerships in regional transportation planning have led to collaborations on important projects concerning the Valley's character, such as the Massachusetts Turnpike/Rt. 146 corridor, the Great Road in Lincoln, and Mendon road in Cumberland.

Enhance town and urban centers: The Commission has worked with and supported several downtown centers on substantial preservation and building re-use projects that will draw new visitors into these areas with visitor centers



*Completion of the Providence to Worcester Blackstone Bikeway remains a top priority of the Commission; construction of the Rhode Island section begins in the Fall of 1997 and will be completed by 2002; a three-mile section will soon be added as part of the new MA Turnpike/Rt. 146 interchange.*

## HOW THE PLAN WAS DEVELOPED

The Planning Subcommittee of the Corridor Commission was the primary lead in guiding the development of The Next Ten Years. In the first few months of an eight month planning period, Commissioners and staff became better acquainted with the newly added areas and participants. In March of 1997, the Commission held two Welcome Workshops, one in Worcester, MA and one in Burrillville, RI to solicit thoughts about important resources and critical issues facing the communities. Approximately 70 people attended each of the workshops. Following the workshops, the Commission held two working sessions related to the Plan supplement. An all-day retreat in May was held to consider past work and accomplishments, and determine an appropriate focus for the coming years. In July, the Commission worked to formulate and endorse the framework for determining a ten year development plan. During these months, the Planning Subcommittee met eight times, while a core group of Commissioners and staff had roundtable discussions with representatives from the economic development and tourism, and environmental communities throughout the Valley. A meeting with valley-wide planners was also held to discuss elements of the plan. Through the process, two full Commission meetings were devoted to discussing and developing The Next Ten Years. Other occasions were used to promote public participation, including an exhibit set up at River Bend Farm in Uxbridge during Canalfest.

In early September, the draft plan was distributed for public review to a library and municipal offices in each Corridor community. Approximately 150 draft plans were also mailed to various Corridor partners. Four informational meetings were held (two in each state) during the first several days of the review period. Initially slated for two weeks, the time frame for public comment was extended for an additional four weeks to enable further input. Written and oral comments were received and considered in developing the final document.

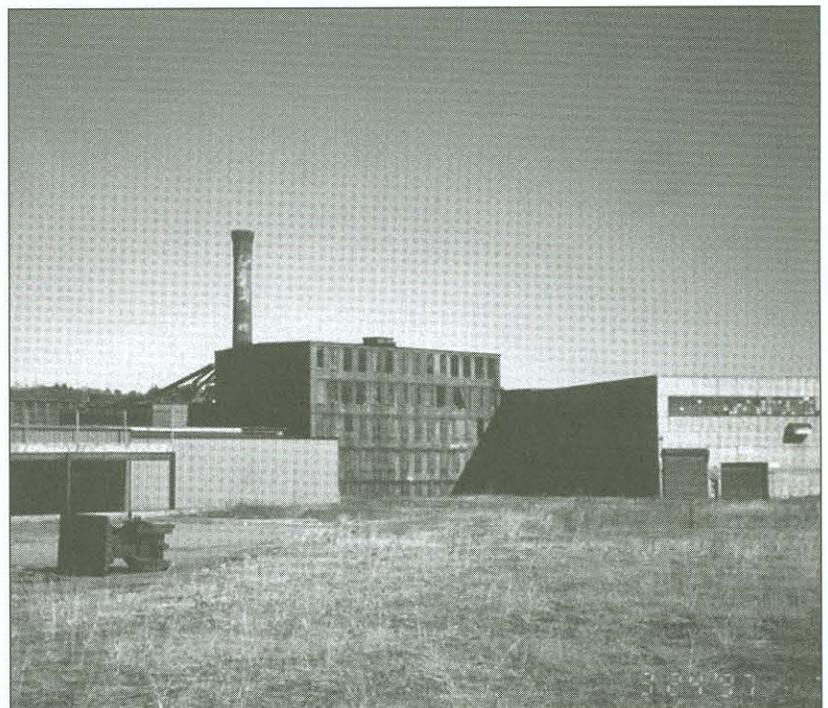


*The Commission has worked with several communities to preserve and reuse historic buildings whose renovations are expected to draw new visitors downtown. Among the best examples is the Visitor Center under development at the Museum of Work and Culture in Woonsocket.*

and museums located in historic or existing buildings. Among the best examples are the Museum of Work and Culture and the Main Street 2000 project, both in Woonsocket, and the Visitor Center under development near Slater Mill in Pawtucket. Urban design and planning assistance has been given to downtowns, such as Blackstone and Uxbridge, to support preservation activities and enhance appeal of these places. Over the next ten years, the Commission expects to be working collaboratively with several partners, including the City of Worcester, to develop a major visitor center around the Quinsigamond Village neighborhood.

Develop a tourism strategy and support tourism development that enhances Corridor values: The Commission has supported programming and tourism development activities through the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council in Rhode Island and the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce in Massachusetts. The Blackstone Valley Explorer, a popular excursion boat partially funded through the Commission, has served more than 80,000 riders. A distinct Valley-wide sign system now taking hold reinforces the Blackstone Valley as a tourist destination. A unified, bi-state tourism strategy remains a goal of the Commission in the decade ahead.

*While development of a comprehensive economic development strategy remains ahead, particular issues, such as the reuse of abandoned and underutilized mill complexes in the Valley, have been explored in partnership with organizations like Historic Massachusetts, Inc..*



# 2

## The Next **Ten Years**

This chapter addresses three inter-related areas which the Commission will face with its new and existing partnerships during the next ten years. These include the Challenges, which must be responded to if the Heritage Corridor is to fully realize its regional potential; the Core Commitments, which are central to achieving the Commission's long-range mission; and the Integration of the New Communities, which poses its own set of issues and opportunities. Taken together, The Next Ten Years, outlines a strategy for the Commission and its partners to achieve a visible, lasting legacy for the future.



*The Strategic Plan for the Next Ten Years begins with the industrial heritage story and the countless ways its legacy continues to shape the future of the Valley.*

## THE CORE CHALLENGES: RESPONDING TO THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE



*The Commission's "story-driven" approach to heritage development assumes that its industrial history story should be well told by a core number of visitor sites and programs.*

As the Commission looks toward the next ten years, it will draw upon the lessons learned from the past in responding to emerging issues posed by the new communities, while it maintains the momentum of the partnerships it has established in the existing communities. One of the central lessons learned by the Commission is how to leverage limited human and financial resources to carry out a broad, geographically wide mission. It has learned to do this successfully, largely by relying on a combination of public education, public-private partnerships, and targeted investments. This proven formula will continue to guide the Commission's work in the future as it engages a core set of issues, described below, that remain at the heart of the Commission's goals and objectives:



*The new Mass Turnpike interchange with Rt. 146 promises to become a significant catalyst for growth at Worcester's gateway to the Corridor.*

**The Story.** The issue here centers around the need to communicate a heritage story of national significance over a large, two-state region where thousands of people continue to live and work. Over the last decade, the Commission and its many partners have helped lead a tremendous effort to identify and interpret these resources and build local awareness. However, the story is still not widely available to national or, even, to New England audiences. Perhaps the largest challenge is that the story is both thematically complex and geographically spread out. A further challenge is the lack of infrastructure for heritage tourism development. Nonetheless, a significant opportunity exists to develop the area as a national visitor destination by linking key historic sites in the region through marketing and interpretation that would enable the Blackstone Valley to take its place among leading New England historic destinations.

**Town and Village Centers and Mill Complexes.** The challenge here is to preserve and revitalize



*Unmanaged growth threatens to produce suburban sprawl patterns that displace the cultural and natural landscapes which are critical to the Blackstone Corridor's public appeal to residents and visitors alike.*

many of the key historic centers that define the man-made character of the Blackstone Valley. Without them, the ability to interpret the heritage story of the Valley is impossible. More importantly, there are established communities whose economic and social viability is essential to the long-term success of the rest of the Corridor. Ongoing development trends toward suburbanization and decentralization of infrastructure threaten to accelerate in the Valley as the local economy recovers. A major catalyst for growth at the northern end of the Corridor is expected to be the new Massachusetts Turnpike interchange for Rt. 146, along with associated route access improvements into Worcester. As more new investment is directed toward undeveloped areas around regional highways like Rt. 146, disinvestment in old mill towns and historic village centers, continues to threaten the Blackstone Valley's historic townscape patterns. These are the very settlement patterns, characterized in the Corridor's Interpretive Framework as the "Farm to Factory" story, which have given the Valley its distinct physical character since the early 19th century.

**Cultural Landscapes.** Due to their seemingly "natural" appearance, these areas, such as pasture lands, present a test perhaps more difficult than preserving the core historic town and village centers. This is particularly true along the riverways, which are key to the Blackstone Valley's historic character and appeal. As economic vitality in the region re-emerges, pressures for suburban develop-

# The Next Ten Years

ment in “greenfield” areas of the Valley will increase. By contrast, public workshops held this year and in the recent past by the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce indicate that local residents wish deeply to conserve the open space qualities of their region, particularly along the major roadways. The growth effects associated with regional highways and emerging employment centers, such as in Smithfield, RI, threaten to accentuate a highly visible process of suburban sprawl which is displacing cultural and natural landscapes that are key to the Blackstone Valley’s public appeal.

**Riverways.** The future of the Blackstone River, with its tributaries and watershed lands, is challenged by effects of historic and modern growth patterns. The impacts of two centuries of manufacturing, together with inappropriate land uses and development characteristics harmful to riverways have resulted in poor water quality. The fluctuating river levels related to hydropower generation demands have adversely impacted wildlife habitat and promoted riverbank erosion. Other related issues include the increasing probability of structural problems with aging mill dams, the principal danger of which is both flooding and the unleashing of built-up, toxic bottom sediments down-

stream. These toxins could, in turn, threaten much of Narragansett Bay’s fishing industry. More than two decades of federal mandates for clean water and pollution control demonstrate that continued progress is possible: indicators of some forms of pollution show declines of roughly two-thirds. The Commission should expect to continue advocating for clean-up in a coordinated and collaborative manner with the appropriate public agencies which shoulder regional responsibility for this task.

## THE CORE COMMITMENTS

In order to maintain an essential balance between existing commitments and new partnerships likely to be forged throughout the new communities, the Commission has identified four basic objectives, outlined below, which are the source of its core programmatic goals for the next ten years:

### 1. TELL THE STORY OF THE AMERICAN INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION BY...

...completing the task of telling the Valley’s full heritage story through a richly detailed system of sites and other interpretive venues which dramatically convey the contributing role of each Valley community in the birth and development story of the American textile industry.

...headlining the Valley’s nationally significant story through the development of a core visitor experience which tells the story of the Birth of the American Industrial Revolution in New England - the epic tale of birth, growth, maturation, and transition which characterize all aspects of the textile story. It tells of the technological innovations in manufacturing and transportation, to social transitions from farm to factory, and from the flowering and decline of the industry to the physical and social legacy available for future generations.



*Four core commitments - Telling the Story of the American Industrial Revolution; Preserving and Enhancing the Valley’s Communities; Balancing Conservation and Growth; and Promoting the Recovery of the River - will shape the Commission’s working agenda over the next ten years.*



*The first Core Commitment focuses on the national significance of the Blackstone’s formative role in the early American Industrial Revolution.*



*The Blackstone River, with its tributaries and watershed lands, is challenged both by effects of past industrial uses and modern growth patterns.*



*The second Core Commitment focuses on the continued need to preserve and revitalize the Valley's towns and village centers.*

...and by shaping a Core Visitor Experience throughout the Story Chapters by employing automobile, train, bicycle, and river “pathways” to special places within the Corridor representing chapters of the heritage story, linked by a signage system which allows transitions from car to bicycle to river craft as part of the heritage travel experience.

**2. PRESERVE AND ENHANCE VALLEY COMMUNITIES BY...**

...preserving and restoring key interpretive resources: Work with potential partners through planning, incentives and education to strengthen preservation-oriented revitalization programs in key communities which would preserve areas of key significance that tell the story.

...enhancing economic opportunity and the quality of life: Launch programs to make town and village centers more competitive for preservation-related investment.

...and demonstrating the linkage between preservation and enhanced communities: Demonstrate where historic preservation and conservation of natural resources can create enhanced value and community amenities which attract and retain residents and businesses.

**3. BALANCE CONSERVATION AND GROWTH BY...**

...expanding the Commission's commitment to preserving valuable cultural and natural landscapes: The Natural Resources Inventory, appended to this plan, identifies many of the key

*A third Core Commitment underscores the delicate but necessary balance needed between stimulating economic growth and conserving the natural and historic places of the Valley.*



resources and recommends a prioritized strategy for their conservation.

...maintaining distinct and appropriate edges to historic places: Appropriate zoning and local decision-making, based upon comprehensive planning and resource assessment, is critical to containing inappropriate sprawl and focusing growth in already developed areas where public infrastructure exists.

...and providing education and case studies to equip local decision makers: Problem solving forums and progressive land use techniques can help stakeholders manage and direct growth for a healthier region.

**4. PROMOTE RIVER RECOVERY BY...**

...reinforcing the Commission's commitment to improving the health of the River system: Existing local, state and federal environmental programs should be augmented by more regional cooperation and the application of new technologies and insights to create appropriate management practices for the River and its watershed. The lands and waters of the Blackstone Valley must be understood as an intricately linked natural system.

...increasing public awareness: Education remains the foundation for building public support for the conservation of natural resources connected to the River watershed.

...and facilitating public use and enjoyment: Opening the entire length of the Blackstone River to more public recreational use and appreciation is central to the goal of the Blackstone Bikeway project, which is developing a “greenway” path with multiple points of public access between Worcester and Providence.

## INTEGRATING THE NEW COMMUNITIES INTO THE ACTION AGENDA

Within the context of the Corridor's rich national and cultural resources are its 24 municipalities which encompass a 46-mile-long Valley Corridor between east-central Massachusetts and northern Rhode Island. Twenty of these communities have been part of the Corridor since 1986, but four of them, and a remaining area of Worcester, are new members added by Congressional authorization in 1996. This expansion has resulted in a significantly larger Heritage Corridor. The boundary area is, in fact, now 60% larger than the original Corridor. The challenge with this larger territory is to maintain the ongoing Action Agenda established by the Management Plan, while integrating the new communities into this agenda and helping them define their role and contribution to the Core Commitments outlined in this Plan supplement.

Progress to date in integrating the new communities has been rapid. Partnerships have already been created in places like Chepachet, RI, where walking tours with NPS rangers along the Chepachet River, have been initiated. Worcester has become a strong partner in the environmental cleanup of the Blackstone headwaters, and has been active in planning for a northern gateway visitors center for some time. As early as 1986, the Quinsigamond Village neighborhood of Worcester participated in a Massachusetts DEM study for a visitors center. In Smithfield, RI, a documented history of the Woonasquatucket River has been created, and, in Leicester, a high school curriculum for industrial history has been developed.

In March 1997, two Welcome Workshops, one in Worcester, MA, and the second in Burrillville, RI, were held by the Commission to solicit ideas and recommendations from the public for future heritage projects in the new communities. At both meetings, four identical sets of questions were put to the participants, who included local community and business leaders, private citizens, organization

directors, and local public officials and elected leaders. Some of the recurring themes heard at both meetings included the need for comprehensive planning which made the connection between natural, cultural and historical resource protection. This was of special concern in light of the future impacts anticipated by the improvements to Rt. 146; the re-use of abandoned mills; the revitalization of older Main Street areas; the continued cleanup of the Blackstone River and its watershed tributaries; the development of a Corridor-long greenway that would include a multi-use path for hikers and bicyclists; and the need to accommodate real growth while discouraging suburban sprawl which adversely impacts the historic character and natural systems of the Valley.

Given the strength of the interests voiced at those public workshops, the Commission's earliest actions in the new communities will focus on linking the Corridor's heritage story in the public's mind to those places by means such as:

- **Heritage Corridor gateway signs at the new town boundaries;**
- **Site-identity signs at historic villages, such as Leicester Common, Harmony, Chepachet, Harrisville, Georgiaville, and key Worcester sites;**
- **Walking tour brochures;**
- **updating the Historic Resources Inventory to include important historic properties, districts and landscapes representative of Valley themes, and architectural and cultural diversity;**
- **Production of television programs that focus upon the new communities;**
- **Cooperation with the City of Worcester to program public space for Heritage Corridor interpretation at Union Station, now being restored, and the development of a visitor center at Quinsigamond Village, in the vicinity of Hurley Square, as part of a Rt. 146 gateway entrance into the City from the new Massachusetts Turnpike interchange.**

## THE NOMINATION PROCESS FOR THE NEW COMMUNITIES

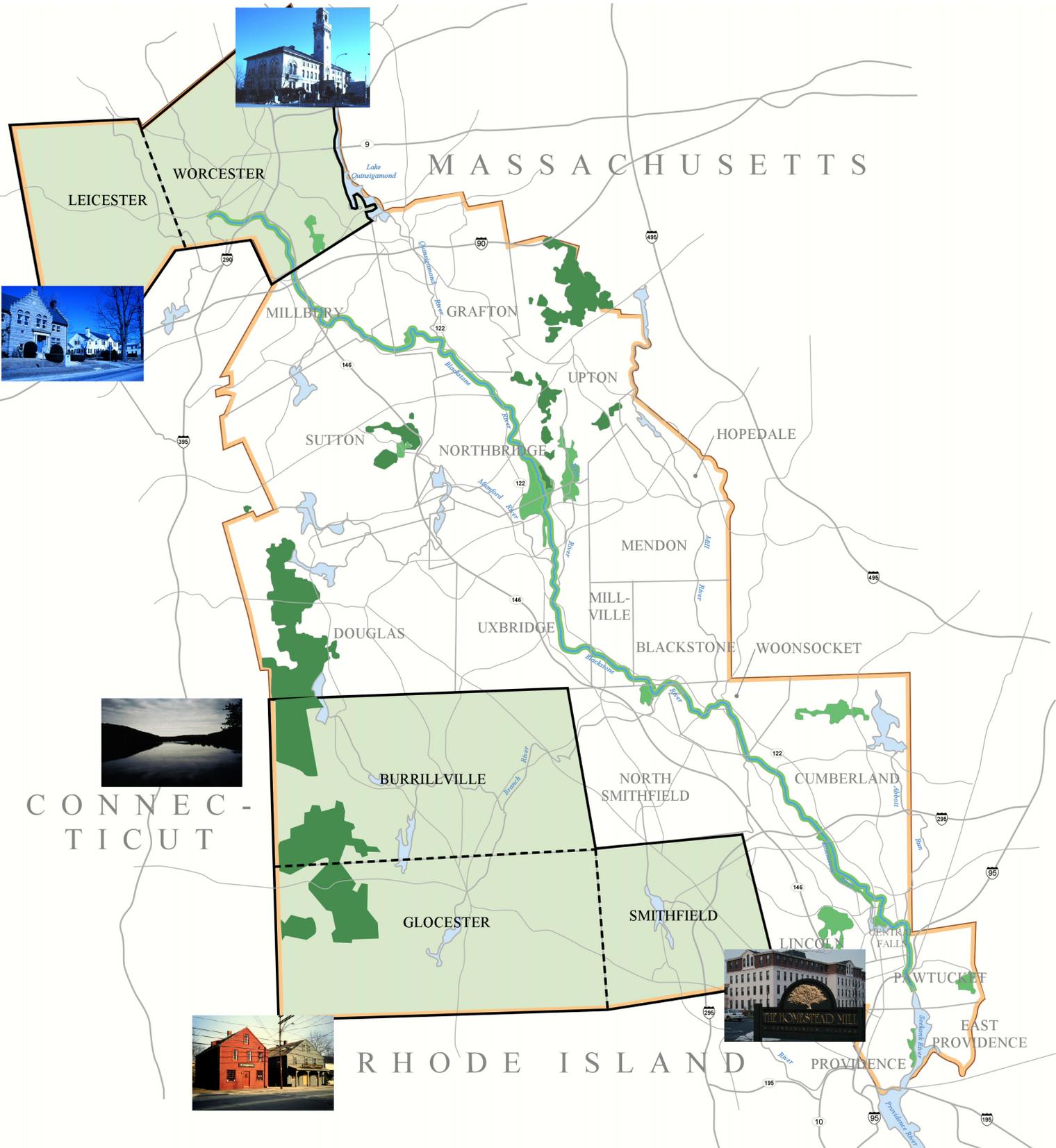
In the period between 1993 and 1994, several communities in the Blackstone River Valley began



*The fourth Core Commitment reaffirms the Commission's longstanding goal to promote recovery of the Blackstone River and encourage greater recreational use of its resources by the public.*



*During the course of the Boundary Study in 1995, the Commission looked for evidence that the new candidate communities were both functionally, ecologically and historically integral components of the Blackstone region.*



BLACKSTONE RIVER VALLEY NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR

The New Communities

# The Next Ten Years



*The new communities offer several excellent examples of historic resource types that promise to contribute to the Commission's ability to tell the heritage story in Rhode Island. In Smithfield, for example, the Smith-Appleby House is an intact 18th century farmhouse evoking the agrarian, colonial period predating the industrialization of the Valley.*

petitioning for inclusion in the Heritage Corridor. Their petitions prompted a boundary study by the National Park Service to assess the significance of their historic and natural resources, as well as their potential for creating effective partnerships with the Commission. During the study, the Commission looked for evidence that the new areas were “functionally, ecologically and historically integral components of the Blackstone region.” Applicants were expected to show a willingness to, and prior evidence of, adopting the Blackstone Corridor's strategy of protecting natural, cultural and historical resources — while working in collaboration with the Commission and other public- and private-sector partners.

Perhaps most compelling in this study process was the new communities' collective potential to bring most of the Blackstone River's remaining watershed lands, including its headwaters, into the Heritage Corridor. By enrolling these communities voluntarily in the improvement and protection of the Blackstone River watershed, the Commission was able to take great strides toward its long-term goal of integrating natural resource management with land-use planning, cultural resource protection, local community revitalization and economic development. From an interpretive standpoint, the new communities also offered several excellent examples of historic resource types, such as rural mill villages in Burrillville, Smithfield and Glocester, which would contribute to the Commission's ability to tell the industrial heritage story in Rhode Island. In Smithfield, the Smith-Appleby House offered an intact 18th century farmhouse evoking that agrarian, colonial period

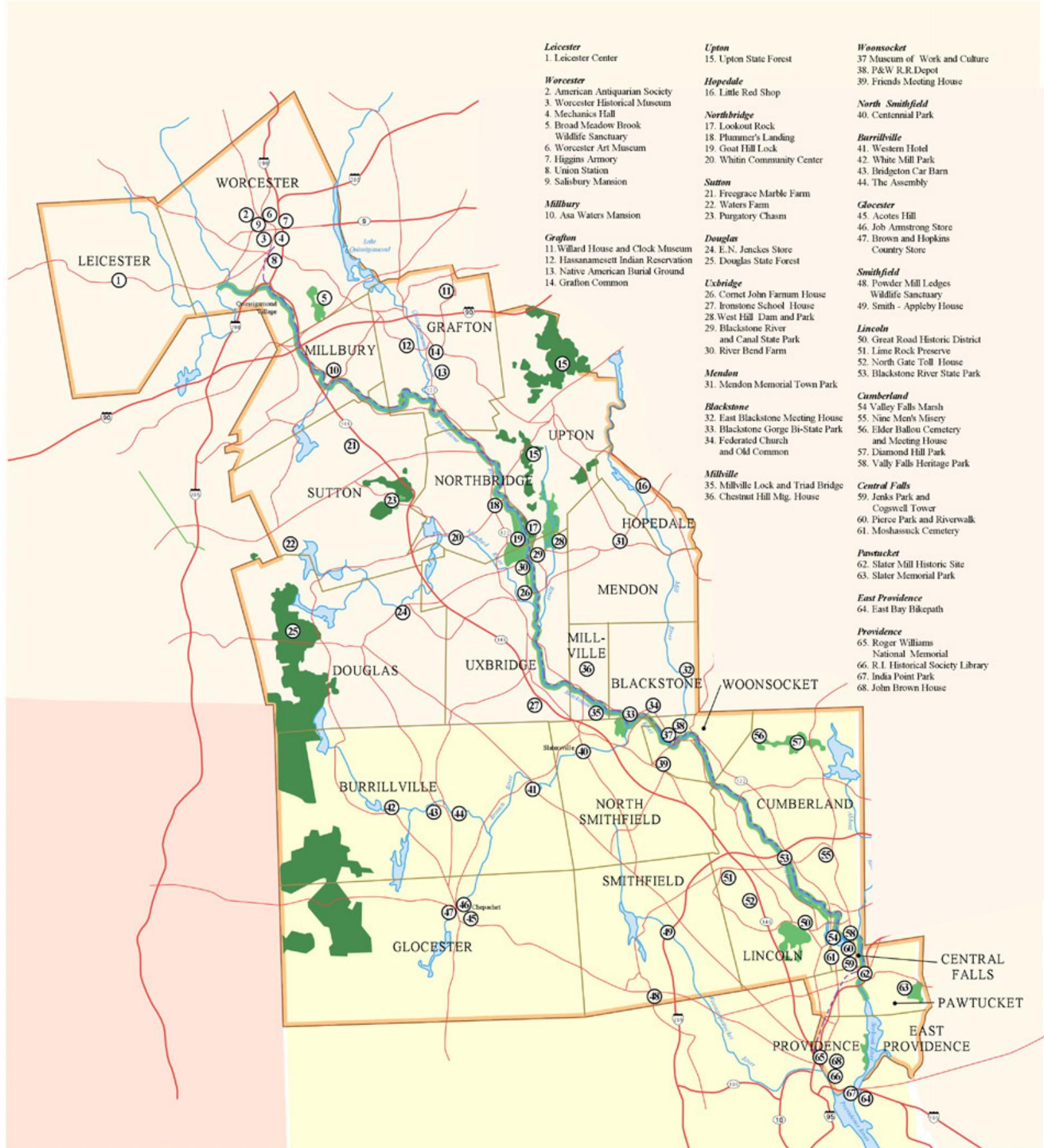
predating the industrialization of the Valley. An important interpretive connection also existed in Leicester, where Pliny Earle's knowledge of the carding process contributed to Samuel Slater's initial attempts at improving his cotton thread-making machinery, ultimately leading to great advances in the early industrial revolution.

## **What the New Communities Brought to the Table**

— Evidence of the new communities' existing commitments to long-range planning and development goals promoted by the Commission already existed as well. Three of the candidates in Rhode Island, for example, had developed comprehensive town plans that addressed natural and cultural resource protection. One of the three, Glocester, had created historic district zoning to protect the early Rhode Island market and mill village of Chepachet, which was cultivating a new image as an antique center. Leicester, an early Quaker community in Massachusetts, had developed a balanced program of resource protection and understood the need to protect the headwaters of the Blackstone. Worcester had also completed comprehensive planning for historic and natural resources and developed a city-wide trails plan which included a greenway and trail system along its portion of the Blackstone River. Many others had put together Heritage Corridor action committees to strengthen their candidacies.



*The Town of Leicester in Massachusetts has developed a balanced strategy for resource protection which understands the need to protect the headwaters of the Blackstone River.*



BLACKSTONE RIVER VALLEY NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR  
 Cultural Heritage Partnership Sites



# 3

## Experiencing the Heritage Corridor

---

### HISTORY, PRESERVATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

In the early part of the 19th century, America was in the midst of a second revolution. In many ways it was a quiet revolution, one that has gone largely unsung and uncelebrated. Yet it was a revolution that profoundly and permanently changed the way Americans live. It transformed a provincial agrarian society into an industrial giant, moved whole populations off the farm and into the factories, and altered our relationship with land, time and with each other. In time, it altered the landscape and affected nearly every aspect of daily life.

The Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor is an incredible collection of historic buildings and roadways, industrial landscapes — mills, mill villages, mill ponds and reservoirs, canal remnants, and agricultural landscapes. Many of these elements are still there — although they're not understood as the system that they once were, because the time when it was a working system has just about passed from living memory. Such an understanding is just below the surface of our modern-day consciousness. The key is to re-surface that historic system — to return it to prominence — not as a working industrial landscape, but as a recognizable and understandable spine. We can use this spine to connect the many wonderful resources and amenities that are important to us today so that people can better understand the role the Blackstone Valley has played in our nation's development.



*The Commission intends to complete its development of the principal visitor centers — those destinations that are fully programmed for visitor orientation and historic in their own right, like River Bend Farm with its restored section of the Blackstone Canal.*

How we go about telling this significant story and preserving special places involves many different strategies and partners. The Commission and its partners have invested in projects that both preserve heritage sites as well as develop facilities that provide visitor services and interpretation of our heritage. A primary strategy that the Commission will continue to implement is the development of a series of major visitor centers and museums linked to the industrial heritage of the Blackstone Valley. Several centers offering different themes and levels of visitor services (rather than one central center) are necessary because there is no one “entrance” into the Corridor. Visitors will arrive through “gateway” communities such as Pawtucket, Glocester, Woonsocket, Hopedale, Douglas and Worcester. From these points visitors will be directed, via extensive Corridor signage, to visitor centers where they will get an overview of the Valley’s industrial story and learn about a particular chapter or theme. Visitors also will be directed to other sites and experiences in the Valley.

Literally hundreds of special places exist in the Corridor for residents and visitors to explore and enjoy. While many sites are open on a regular basis with professional staff, many others are operated by volunteers during limited hours or special events. The Commission aims to continue its support for developed sites as well as encourage smaller organizations to further develop their sites and programs. The Commission will encourage heritage sites, universities, businesses and tourism organizations to bring together cooperators and partners in the Corridor system to look for opportunities to collaborate and strengthen each other

and the Corridor as a whole. Regardless of a site’s current status, places that tell a particular theme are critical to supporting the overall interpretation of the Valley. Examples of some of the public heritage sites include:

- **Slater Mill Historic Site in Pawtucket stands as a Valley symbol to the American Industrial Revolution**
- **Willard House and Clock Museum in Grafton, Waters Farm in Sutton, the Daggett House in Pawtucket, the Smith-Appleby House in Smithfield, the John Hunt House and Hunt’s Mill in East Providence, and Lime Rock and Eleazer Arnold House in Lincoln are examples of early settlement in the Blackstone Valley**
- **E.N. Jenckes Store in East Douglas, Chase Farm in Lincoln, the Grafton Common, and the Job Armstrong Store in Chepachet reveal 19th century rural lifestyles**
- **Blackstone River State Park in Lincoln includes intact sections of the canal and towpath and soon an interpretive display at the Kelly House**
- **Chestnut Hill Meeting House in Millville, Federated Church in Blackstone, Friends Meeting House in Uxbridge were important civic and religious places**
- **Salisbury Mansion in Worcester, John Brown House in Providence and the Asa Waters Mansion in Millbury are indicators of wealth and industrial power**
- **Broad Meadow Brook Wildlife Sanctuary in Worcester, the Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Sanctuary in Smithfield, Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park, Purgatory Chasm State Park, Douglas, Sutton and Upton State Forests in Massachusetts, and Lincoln Woods State Park, Buck Hill Management Area and Pulaski Memorial Park in Rhode Island provide environmental education and opportunities for recreation**
- **Mill villages and the vernacular landscape of the Valley provide the setting for many historic sites while offering glimpses into the daily routines of village life, such as Rockdale in Northbridge, where portions of the mill complex house outlet stores, East Douglas with its Main Street of businesses and local eateries, and Valley Falls in Cumberland where mill ruins form a riverside park, and many more**
- **Festivals and the arts are also important to a person’s appreciation of the Valley’s culture - the Blackstone River Theatre, home to Pendragon in Cumberland hosts world-class traditional artists highlighting ethnic music and dance, Heritage Homecoming celebrates the heritage of the Valley by bringing together all of the Massachusetts communities and highlighting each community’s history, the Labor and Ethnic Heritage Festival held in**

# Experiencing the Heritage Corridor

**Pawtucket provides a forum for labor issues and a festive atmosphere for ethnic foods, music and dance; and various seasonal festivals held throughout the Corridor, educate, entertain and assist in perpetuating the Valley's heritage.**

## **THE UNVEILING OF A NATIONAL STORY:**

### **WAYS TO EXPERIENCE THE HERITAGE CORRIDOR**

What is especially intriguing about opportunities to explore the Heritage Corridor is that it can be experienced in a variety of ways:

- **By bicycle, travelers will venture along the emerging Blackstone River Bikeway, which will be enhanced with interpretive signage and bike-path spurs to important sites;**
- **By watercraft, such as canoe, kayaks and excursion boats, visitors will explore scenic stretches of the Blackstone River rarely, if ever, seen by most visitors;**
- **By train, special excursion trains will follow scenic parts of the River's course along the Providence & Worcester Railroad line for special events and guided tours;**
- **By automobile, visitors will follow the Corridor's back roads and highways guided by directional signs to historic sites and visitor centers, especially its many mill villages which stand along the River;**
- **By foot, hikers can explore stretches of the River and Blackstone Canal along the Bikeway and Towpath.**

In all cases, special guides and new interpretive signage and exhibits can bring the story to life in ways which are unique to the Valley. Visitors can be transported from car to bike to canoe, sometimes making connections from one mode to the next via

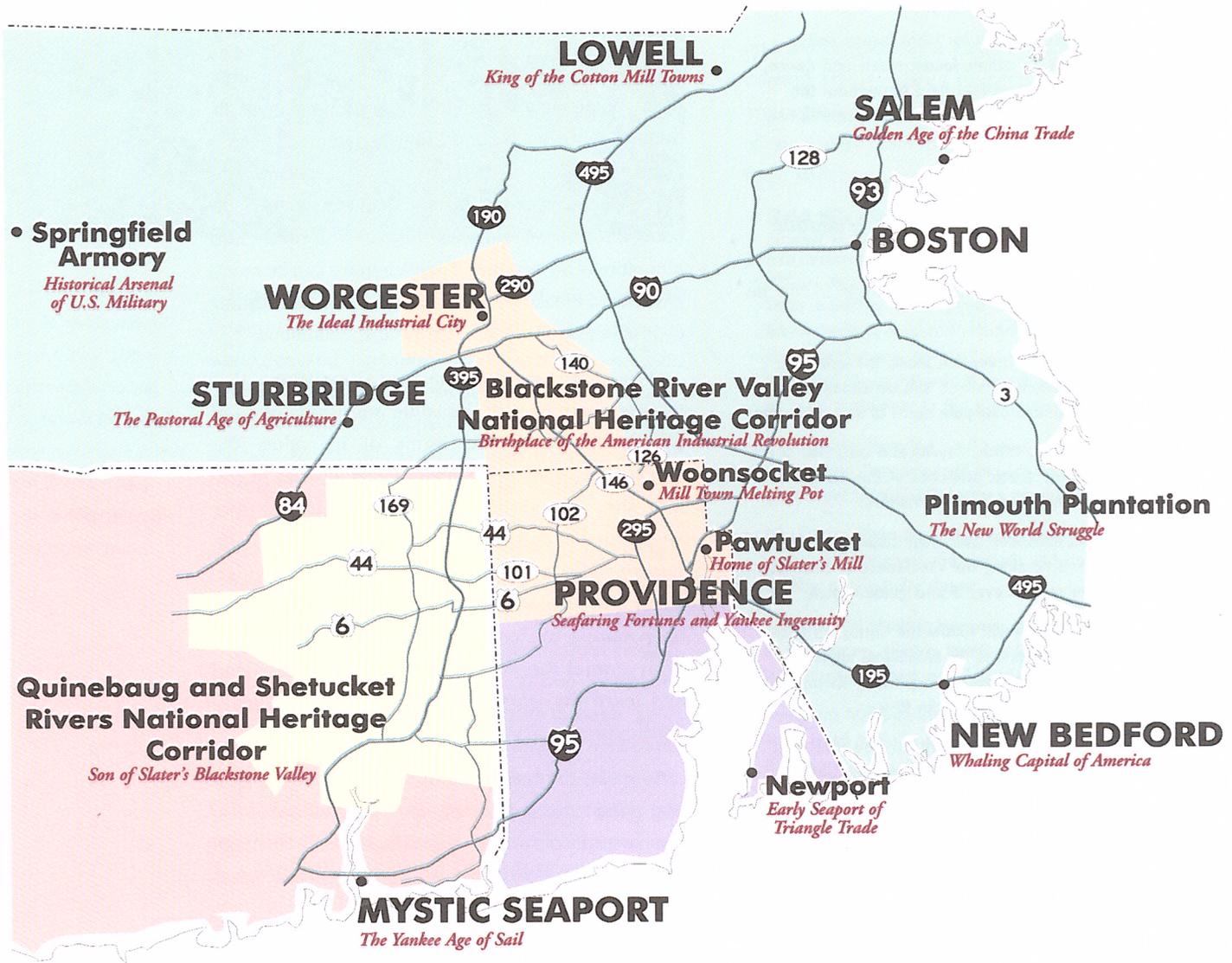
livery services that would transport people to their next destination or back to a starting point where their vehicle may be parked. By exploring segments of the Valley over one or more days, visitors can experience the Valley's story in a fascinating variety of ways, including living history demonstrations, outdoor interpretive exhibits, indoor museums, and recreational adventures. Their itinerary can be strictly planned to take advantage of special annual events or festivals, or allowed to be more spontaneous.

It is important to note two dimensions that together help convey the value and uniqueness of telling the story. In terms of its value, the Blackstone Valley represents one of a series of historic sites around the country which together offer an invaluable opportunity to experience American history. This context is critical not only to understand how to best tell the story, but to understand its potential to draw a national audience-visitors from around the world can come to New England and learn the story of America's birth and early development.

To make the "story" more accessible to the general public and marketable to a national audience, the interpretation of the Blackstone Heritage Corridor has been organized into chronological

*Unlike many single-site heritage destinations, various aspects of the Blackstone story can be experienced by automobile, bicycle pathway, riverway or, by railroad during special events.*





BLACKSTONE RIVER VALLEY NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR

New England Heritage Tourism

# Experiencing the Heritage Corridor

“chapters,” each tied to special places in the Valley where significant resources best convey a particular aspect of that story. Four primary visitor centers located at Worcester, Uxbridge, Woonsocket and Pawtucket will serve several functions. As a group, they will provide an organizational framework for the Corridor. This will require that each visitor center site be developed with some level of consistency so that they are understood as part of one overall system. Secondly, each visitor center site will provide a physical and thematic focus for the chapter it represents. These centers will provide programmatic devices, such as visitor guides and marketing brochures, that will orient visitors to this story-book approach, allowing them to experience various chapters over several days and/or visits. Lastly, the communities at which these core projects are located, have made a commitment to heritage preservation and development which has in turn, led to revitalized downtowns, riverfront parks, transportation improvements and expanded business opportunities. These critical, value-added, developments are very important in making the Valley a place that will attract residents and visitors alike.

## THE STORY: FROM BIRTH TO DECLINE TO RENEWAL

### CHAPTER 1,

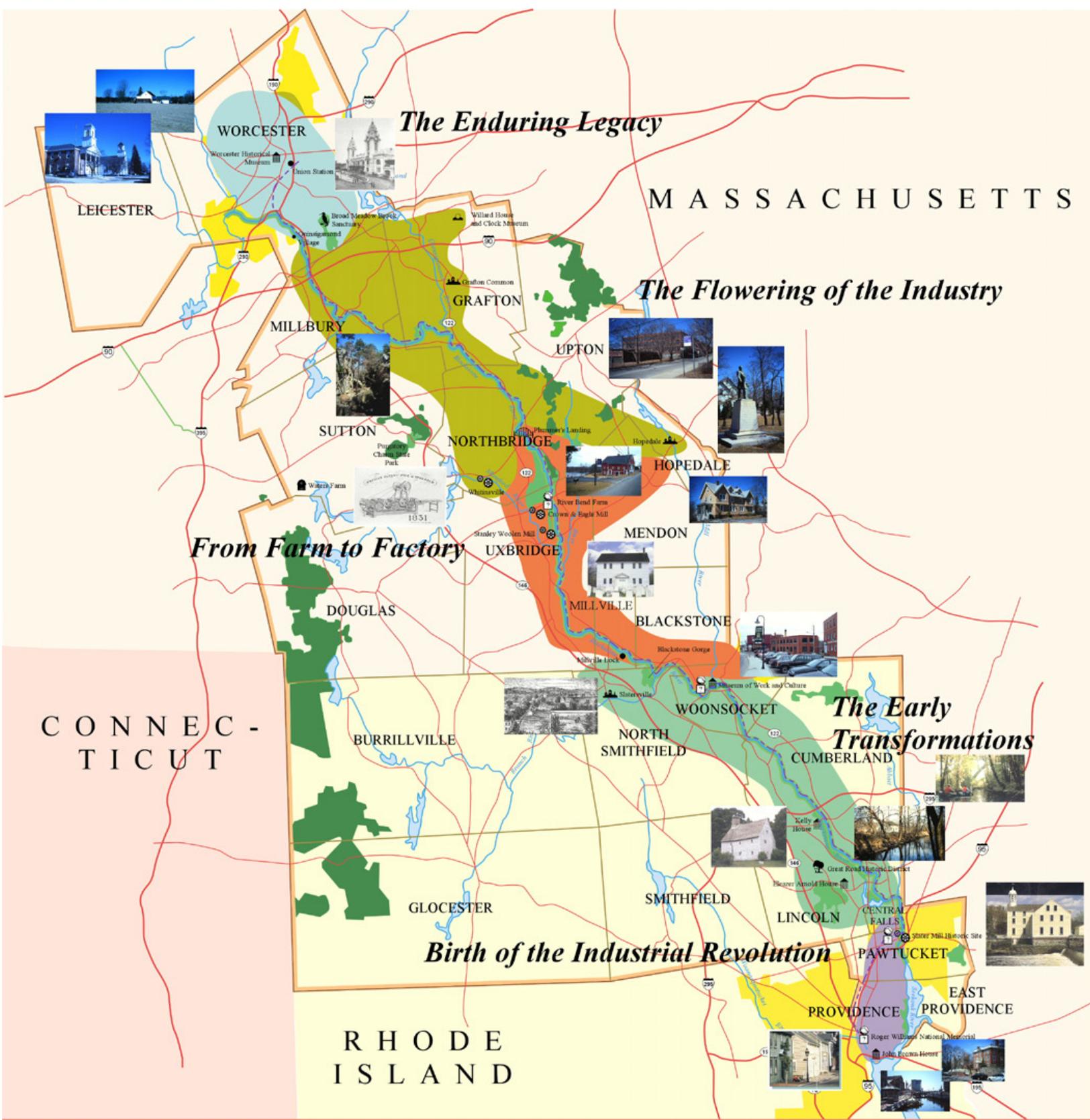
The Birth of the American Industrial Revolution, begins at the south end of the Heritage Corridor where the seeds of technological innovation and capital wealth first took root to create a revolutionary transition from hand-made to machine-made goods. The central figure in this saga is Samuel Slater who is credited for having engineered America's first successful cotton-spinning mill (1793). His wood-frame mill building in Pawtucket still stands as the flagship of cultural resources in the Blackstone Valley-site of the first successful attempt to adapt English manufacturing technology to American manufacturing needs. The Slater Mill Historic Site, and the Blackstone Heritage Corridor Visitor Center located across the street, will focus on the Corridor's “headline” story: the founding period of industrialization and its profound ramifications for American history. The Visitor Center, in particular, will offer an overview of the Industrial Revolution and orientation for visitors to the historic and cultural sites throughout the Valley. Other ongoing features and special events programming at Slater Mill — outdoor exhibits, machinery demonstrations and seasonal festivals such as the Labor and Ethnic Heritage Festival — will augment the Center's well-rounded



*The interpretation of the Corridor's headline story has been organized around a story-book approach where special visitor sites convey the primary messages from each chapter of the American Industrial Revolution.*

*Samuel Slater, credited with having built America's first successful cotton-spinning mill in 1790, is the central figure in the Corridor's Birth of the Industrial Revolution story.*





*The Enduring Legacy*

MASSACHUSETTS

*The Flowering of the Industry*

*From Farm to Factory*

CONNECTICUT

*The Early Transformations*

*Birth of the Industrial Revolution*

RHODE ISLAND



BLACKSTONE RIVER VALLEY NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR  
 Birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution

# Experiencing the Heritage Corridor

## CHAPTER 2,

The Early Transformations tells the story of a changing way of life in the Valley's physical form — how people lived, their settlement patterns, culture, and evolving transportation systems — that all occurred within a relatively brief period of time following the establishment of Slater Mill. The changes reflected the early growth of the textile industry as played out through transformations of production, labor and new technology. Lifestyles shifted from agrarian ways where work was influenced by nature's rhythms, to factory shifts where lives were dictated by time clocks. The culture of these new villages was shaped by the demands of the textile production. Mechanization and technological advances altered the landscape with new modes of transportation: early dirt roads were paved into regional turnpikes, and canals were abandoned for more efficient railroads. In time, small mills grew into larger complexes as innovations in production allowed larger output and higher demand required plant expansion. In Woonsocket's Market Square, The Museum of Work and Culture, located in a renovated mill, features exhibits about the saga of immigration, labor and the battle for cultural survival. Exhibits immerse visitors in the French-Canadian experience — visitors experience a Quebec farmhouse, a parochial school, "triple-decker" house, and a union labor hall. The museum also serves as a key visitor orientation point for the Corridor. Main Street 2000 and the City of Woonsocket have used the museum development as a key element in their revitalization efforts of the Downtown. The Blackstone Bikeway will also connect through here. Planned outdoor exhibits and other landscape elements will enliven the surrounding area. A French-Canadian inspired Jubilee (celebration) and seasonal river tours on The Blackstone Valley Explorer will draw visitors and offer opportunities for reinforcing the story line.



*The John Brown House, Providence, RI*

orientation mission for visitors. Ongoing preservation efforts along Main Street and the River continue to be an important element in shaping an attractive atmosphere for residents and visitors.

The story extends south to Providence which served as the Blackstone Valley's seaport and whose Yankee merchants provided much of the financial backing for the development of factory-based manufacturing. Interpretive signs along the Providence Riverwalk detail the evolution of Providence from Colonial times to the heights of the industrial era. Benefit Street features the homes of some of the prominent mill owners of the Blackstone Valley such as Sullivan Dorr, Wilbur Kelly and Edward Carrington. Chief among these financiers were the Brown brothers including Moses Brown who provided much of the investment capital to fund Slater's Mill and John Brown who as early as 1796 proposed building a canal along the Blackstone River. Currently serving as a visitor site, the Rhode Island Historical Society's John Brown House offers a representative example of the wealth and influence that these merchant-investors had on emerging industrial enterprises. Collaborative special events and stronger interpretive connections to the birth of the American Industrial Revolution will be the catalyst to draw Providence visitors into the Blackstone Valley.



*The Early Transformations chapter explores the revolution in life styles that many New Englanders experienced as farm families traded their plows for textile machines.*

*Moffett Mill (1812), owned by the Town of Lincoln, is a rare surviving example of an early water-powered, machine shop built during the first wave of the Blackstone's industrialization (1790-1820).*



*Exhibits in the Kelly House will convey the story of how the Valley's landscape was transformed by industrialization. Physical reminders of these changes are evident throughout the Blackstone River State Park, where the house is located.*

Several elements of the Valley's transformation are illustrated by the cultural landscape at the Kelly House and other resources of the Blackstone River State Park in Lincoln. Wilbur Kelly, a former sea captain turned mill owner, helped develop the Blackstone Canal. The mill manager's house is all that remains intact from the early mill complex located along the Blackstone Canal. Recently restored by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, the house will have exhibits conveying the changing industrial landscape. The Transformations theme will feature transportation technology, shifts from maritime to industrial trade, and changes from agrarian settings to mill villages. These, in combination with remnants of the mill, intact sections of the Blackstone Canal and towpath, and outdoor exhibits will offer excellent opportunities for uncovering clues to the story in this setting. The opportunity to experience this site from a different perspective will be available with the completion of the first section of the Blackstone Bikeway here.

The Great Road Historic District, which connected Providence with Worcester generations before the Blackstone Canal made the same commercial link in the 1820s, is a fine example of one of America's earliest regional connections. Constructed between the 1660s and 1683, the 4.5 mile stretch in Lincoln, RI, is lined with several historic buildings, including Moffett Mill (1812), the Eleazer Arnold House (1687), the Chase Farm (c.1867), and the Hannaway Blacksmith Shop (1870-95), which convey the early industrial underpinnings of a largely agricultural landscape. Better access among Great Road historic sites would enhance the experience of this cultural landscape.

Slatersville, which is considered the first planned industrial village in the United States, offers visitors a well-preserved example of the emerging factory-based life style. Two historic commercial buildings, a church and common, mill housing and much of the early mill complex remain. Slatersville is an excellent example of an intact village whereby wisely placed dollars by various entities and a bit of creativity could result in a rejuvenated village, where people could once again reside in the village and work in the mill. The village offers excellent interpretive opportunities along the river or in the mill. While outdoor exhibitry will be installed at three site locations, a need still exists to create visitor amenities and a more festive atmosphere for telling the Slatersville story. Nearby, the Blackstone Gorge offers special recreational opportunities to explore the last remaining stretch of natural or "pre-industrial" river before the Blackstone was extensively dammed and its wild appearance lost.



*The Arnold House, operated by the Society for the Preservation for New England Antiquities, provides a dramatic contrast between the rural, agrarian life styles that prevailed in New England before the textile industry and the mill villages that followed.*

# Experiencing the Heritage Corridor

## CHAPTER 3,

From Farm to Factory captures the story of an agrarian society and how it was changed by the industrial revolution — first by the early mill laborers leaving the rural environs in search of better opportunities, and then by providing the raw materials, continuing an interdependence of economies well into the 20th Century. The Blackstone Canal plays a supporting role in this story as key in reinforcing the relationship between farm and factory. Farm goods and raw materials were shipped to the mills, while finished products were sent via canal to marketplaces. Excellent canal features and varied landscapes offer the visitor wonderful opportunities to experience an intact section of the Canal and Towpath.

At River Bend Farm, which is part of the Blackstone River & Canal Heritage State Park in Uxbridge, a recently renovated timber frame barn houses one of the Corridor's main Visitor Centers offering people a warm welcome and Corridor-wide orientation. Permanent exhibits are being developed which set the context for understanding the major changes of the industrial revolution by describing pre-industrial life in the Blackstone Valley, an agrarian society living in surprising conditions where every member of the farm family worked towards a “comfortable subsistence.” The story line continues by examining how industrialization changed these farmers' lives, even as they provided for the mills and growing mill communities. Included in that story is the Blackstone Canal, which played an important role in developing the Valley's early industrial economy. A towpath trail connects the Stanley Woolen Mill to the south with canal-related and natural sites to the north. Further south along the River in Millville, the



*The Blackstone Canal played a supporting role in the Farm to Factory story, reinforcing the production relationship between raw farm materials, like wool, which were shipped by canal to the mills, and finished mill products, like blankets, which were shipped to country stores where farmers could have purchased them.*



*Waters Farm in Sutton offers a particularly picturesque setting for special events and festivals that showcase the farmer's role in the larger industrial story.*



*The Blackstone Gorge reveals the “wild” features of the pre-industrial river before the Blackstone was dammed for power and its untamed appearance was largely lost.*



*Chapter 4 celebrates The Flowering of the Industry, the high point of textile manufacturing during which the region's productivity in yarns and cloth and finished goods, like clothing and blankets, exceeded that of any other place in the world.*

Millville Lock is the most intact of the Blackstone Canal's few surviving remnants of marvelous stone construction and engineering. The Blackstone Valley Explorer already takes visitors to the Lock. Locks were critical elements in a boat's ability to traverse a long canal and river whose elevation often rose and fell dozens of feet over the course of its route.



*Hopedale is an exceptional company-built town where the social and religious ideals of its founders, the Draper family, inspired its unique housing, social policies and community programs.*

Perhaps no better place in the valley allows visitors to experience agrarian life from the 18th century through today, than at Waters Farm in Sutton, a comprehensive farming complex that supported seven generations of the Waters family. Owned by the Town and preserved by Waters Farm Preservation, Inc., an active membership provides house tours, blacksmithing demonstrations, shingle milling, interpretation of early American crafts and sponsors a successful "Farm Days" event each fall.

#### **CHAPTER 4,**

The Flowering of the Industry, celebrates the high point of textile manufacturing during which the region's productivity in yarns and cloth and finished goods, like clothing and blankets, exceeded that of any other place in the world. The architectural legacy of this period is, perhaps, best captured by the company town which was often paternalistic built, managed and maintained. Two of the Valley's best intact examples are Hopedale and Whitinsville, both famed for their leadership as textile machinery manufacturers. The core of Hopedale village offers the visitor an exceptional example of a company town where the religious ideals of the founders, rooted in the settlement's



*Once the world's leading center of textile machinery manufacturing, Whitinsville still preserves diverse examples of company-built housing, schools, churches, social halls, and municipal buildings.*

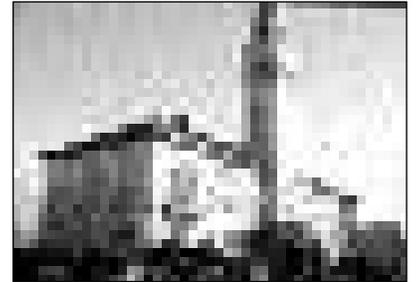
utopian origins, inspired its social policies and community programs. The turn of the century company-built homes, which housed both workers and managers, are one of the Valley's most remarkable architectural ensembles, sited artfully in several cases to take advantage of views over the mill pond. In addition to several outdoor wayside exhibits, this chapter of the story could possibly be told at one of the civic buildings, the Draper Mill or the Little Red Shop, located on the Mill Pond, which currently contains exhibits on textile machinery and the Draper family.

The architectural forms and geography of Whitinsville presents a remarkably complete picture of a company town. Once the world center of textile machinery manufacturing, this former family-owned town still preserves diverse examples of Whitin-built housing, schools, churches, municipal buildings, dairy farm, library and recreational center. An attraction or exhibits which tell the story of benevolence could be located in one of the Town's historic buildings, symbols of its industrial prime.

# Experiencing the Heritage Corridor

## CHAPTER 5,

The Enduring Legacy, which focuses on Worcester, covers several aspects of the textile industry's effects, which left their imprint on communities throughout the Valley. The rich surviving architectural legacy of Worcester best epitomizes the private and public prosperity created by textile-making between the 1860s and 1920s. The cultural legacy encompasses the many ethnic groups which settled into distinct neighborhoods where folkways and cultural symbols still persist. The environmental legacy of the industry is still unfolding in numerous places along the Blackstone. An especially striking example in south Worcester focuses on the resilience of working communities trying to reclaim the Blackstone River from industrial spoils and revitalize neglected mill sites through progressive initiatives. The Route 146 project, which highlights today's technology, will combine elements of greenway development, including a section of the Blackstone Bikeway, bio-engineering to restore wetland features, and landscape elements celebrating the Valley's transportation history.



*The rich surviving architectural legacy of Worcester captures the private and public prosperity created by the textile industry and other commerce between the 1860s and 1920s.*

The centerpiece of this program would be the Northern Gateway Visitor Center for a site to be determined in Quinsigamond Village. An opportunity exists here to create a “critical mass” of visitor amenities which would take advantage of its easy access to and from the Massachusetts Turnpike and as a gateway to downtown Worcester and the corridor leading into the Valley. Like the Blackstone Heritage Corridor Visitor Center in Pawtucket, the site would primarily serve as the gateway center for tourist information and orientation to the Heritage Corridor at its northern end. The site would also be tied to the Blackstone Bikeway route and a restored greenway, or wildlife and natural river area. A collaborative approach would need to be developed between various partners, such as the Corridor Commission, the Worcester Historical Museum, the Central Massachusetts Tourist Council, the Blackstone River Valley Visitors Bureau, the Broad Meadow Brook Wildlife Sanctuary of the Massachusetts Audubon Society, the City of Worcester, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management, the Massachusetts Highway Department, and the New England Science Center. Once Union Station is restored, it is anticipated that a portion of the ground-floor central lobby space will be designated for heritage-oriented exhibits, perhaps focusing upon the transportation history of the Valley, and some visitor services.



*Barbed wire was part of the industrial legacy of Worcester, manufactured in Quinsigamond Village.*

The station will also be the northern terminus for the Blackstone Bikeway, which will extend along the river corridor as far south as Providence, RI.

Worcester Historical Museum offers a splendid collection and excellent interpretation of Worcester's historical development from a small country market town to an incredibly productive manufacturing center and transportation hub which became New England's second largest city after Boston. Its gallery of changing exhibits often focuses upon the legacy, both architectural, social and cultural, that its diversified economy produced through the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

At Broad Meadow Brook Wildlife Sanctuary and Visitor Information Center, the story of river recovery can be told through exhibits which explore watershed dynamics and industry's impacts on our waterways. Programs offered by Massachusetts Audubon Society provide tools to citizens to help them improve waterways where they live and work. The New England Science Center offers exhibits and interpretive workshops that focus upon advances in science and new technology which have the potential to help transform the post-industrial economy of the Blackstone Valley.



*Union Station, Worcester, c.1911*



*The Northern Gateway Visitor Center in Worcester's Quinsigamond Village will take advantage of its easy access from the Massachusetts Turnpike and downtown Worcester.*



BLACKSTONE RIVER VALLEY NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR

# The Mill & Hill Villages



# 4

## Strategic **Development**

### **THE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY:**

#### **HOW THE CORE COMMITMENTS WILL BE ACHIEVED**

The Blackstone Corridor is unique among many regions in that it actively pursues six major priorities: education and interpretation, recreation development, ethnic and cultural conservation, historic preservation, economic development and land-use management. That is a very big agenda for a limited staff and budget. Most areas have chosen to concentrate on only one or two of these areas. Think about it - there are a number of cities and towns that have had long-term success in preserving the values that are important to them - but can you think of many “regions” where there has been a long-term history of proactive cooperation across governmental boundaries and among organizations with all sorts of different missions to foster culture, preserve landscapes and historic sites, provide recreation and to base economic development on them? In the long run, the Blackstone approach will give the Corridor exceptional value, but it has meant that the Commission has had to be diligent and exceptionally entrepreneurial in its outreach and in identifying and acting on opportunities.



*The Heritage Corridor requires the development of a “critical mass” of visitor sites, programs and services to draw people to the Valley. Targeted investment in key sites, programs, and services will become part of the Commission’s legacy for the future.*

As stated in the Management Plan, the Commission realizes that cooperative action among state and local governments, civic groups, planning boards, businesses, environmental and cultural organizations - and many others - will be necessary to get the needed results. To get the most of limited Federal funds and time, the Commission has defined four core commitments that will be used as criteria for working in partnership on heritage related projects. As suggested by some Valley professionals, the Commission will consider soliciting proposals for project ideas on a three-year cycle. Priorities and opportunities would be considered as the Commission works with its partners to develop an action agenda for each coming year based on its annual appropriations.

## **THE DEVELOPMENT APPROACH**

Over the years, the financial and in-house commitments from communities and organizations supporting Corridor projects has created an impressive leveraging portfolio for the Commission. These “contingent commitments” by partners — whether it be time, money, staffing or policy revision — will again be key to deciding where the Commission places its resources and assistance.

*As the Commission embarks upon its second ten years, it has committed itself to leaving a tangible legacy of sustainable development projects and programs.*



# Strategic Development

zations (these estimates do not include operational staff support for the Commission). A preliminary budget of \$15 million is outlined in the following Development Strategy section.

**The Heritage Infrastructure** – The Heritage Corridor requires the development of a “critical mass” of visitor sites, programs and services which will draw people to the Valley and engage a diversity of interests in the textile heritage theme. A targeted investment in these core sites, programs, and services will become the Corridor Commission’s physical legacy for the future by:

- **assisting with designing and establishing a northern Corridor visitor center (in Worcester’s Hurley Square) which would serve as a primary gateway into the Valley**
- **completing the Corridor-wide identity program (signage, interpretive and tourism publications, television programming, film, etc.)**
- **developing a network of “hospitality centers,” in partnership with local tourism related businesses that would act as an outlet for visitor information (using the Corridor identity system - design brochure racks, literature, etc. that could be distributed from these points)**
- **completing visitor centers at Slater Mill in Pawtucket and the Museum of Work and Culture in Woonsocket, and interpretive exhibits/visitor information at Kelly House in Lincoln and River Bend Farm in Uxbridge; and nurturing their ongoing development**
- **developing “exhibit centers” and/or “attractions” to infuse the heritage story with life at key thematic sites (approx. 1,000 s.f. of space or attractions that provide dynamic/interactive interpretation opportunities); example sites may include industrial paternalism at Hopedale/Whitinsville, the first planned mill village at Slatersville, a canal boat excursion at River Bend Farm or Kelly House, etc.)**
- **establishing connections through the development of off-shoot trails and intermodal transportation services (bicycle to watercraft liveries) from the bikeway and River to key visitor sites**
- **assisting with stabilization of remaining canal locks and other critical features, such as Millville Lock and Goat Hill Lock in conjunction with Massachusetts DEM**

Estimated Capital Development Cost:           **\$3,425,000**  
 Estimated Programming Cost (10 years):       **\$1,600,000**

## **Partnership and leveraging opportunities**

Identifying the entire Valley, and key historic and natural sites within, is critical to heightening awareness of this nationally significant region. Completing the Corridor-wide sign system is a top priority for the Commission over the next ten years. Each of the twenty original communities has in place a Cooperative Agreement to work with the Commission and state highway departments to establish signs in their community. Forging Cooperative Agreements in the new communities will be a first step in continuing the program.

Like other infrastructure projects completed in the past, several funding programs offer unique opportunities to leverage Corridor funds for greater effect. For example, federal transportation “Enhancement Funds” are being used to revitalize Market Square in Woonsocket, more than matching the relatively small Commission contribution. Landscape features throughout the Square and outdoor exhibits will communicate the impressive use of water power harnessed to catapult the City center into textile prominence. Similarly, the RIDEM is targeting the Federal Lands Highway Program for key access, parking and visitor service needs related to development of the Blackstone Bikeway.

Local businesses as “hospitality centers” and private concessions supporting visitor center activities offer numerous partnership opportunities.



*The celebration and interpretation of the Blackstone Valley’s cultural legacy complements the visitor sites under development.*

## HERITAGE PROGRAMMING

The celebration and understanding of the Blackstone Valley’s cultural legacy through education, festivals and events, coordinated activities among sites, and through the traditional arts, complements the physical infrastructure being developed. Heritage-related programming would accommodate a variety of ongoing and new initiatives such as:

- **develop a cultural conversation program to perpetuate folklife expressions and educate others about the Valley’s cultural and ethnic heritage — document various folk groups, ethnicity, celebrations, song and dance, craftsmanship, etc.**
- **assisting the existing sites in telling the Valley’s story by providing interpretive materials, helping train volunteers, and assisting in identifying the role of individual sites in the Valley’s larger story**
- **“teaching teachers” program for the public schools emphasizing curriculum development in local and regional heritage**
- **developing working relationships with organizations which support cultural events and the traditional arts; integrate Commission activities and provide support to organizations such as the Blackstone River Theatre (Pendragon), Labor and Ethnic Heritage Festival, Waters Farm, etc.**
- **forging a new level of working relationships among partnership sites focused on creating a cohesive visitor experience (e.g. additional Corridor-wide interpretation, coordinated hours, marketing strategies, tour packages, joint tickets, etc.)**
- **holding an annual conference on the American Industrial Revolution (in cooperation with other associated organizations, such as Slater Mill, Lowell National Historical Park, American Textile Museum, etc.)**
- **launching a program to train volunteers to assist NPS rangers in education, interpretation, tours, etc.**
- **initiating an early American History promotional collaboration with other “headline” New England sites (Plymouth, Sturbridge, Lowell, Mystic, Salem, Boston, etc.)**

**Estimated Capital Development Cost: \$150,000**  
**Estimated Programming Cost (10 years): \$1,000,000**

## Partnership and leveraging opportunities

Keeping the stories and traditions alive in the Valley promotes and sustains a true pride of place. More than a dozen walking tour brochures, which incorporate wonderful local anecdotes and special places, are complete. Others are underway, and brochures will be developed for each of the recently added Towns. Arts and Humanities programs at the state and federal level offer funds for communities and organizations to archive, promote or teach folkway traditions. In Massachusetts, the Commission collaborated with Massachusetts Audubon and Clark University through the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities for “Knowing Our Place,” a guide and program featuring historic waterways and how they have affected peoples’ lives. With the Rhode Island Heritage Commission, the Corridor Commission collaborated through a Rhode Island Committee for the Humanities grant on a Blackstone Valley Foodways project featuring recipes as a window into community folklife.



*The Commission will remain committed to assisting visitor sites by providing interpretive materials, training volunteers, and helping sites define their roll in bringing the Valley’s heritage story to life.*

# Strategic Development

## STRATEGIC DESIGN AND PLANNING ASSISTANCE

Assistance would be provided as requested by the Commission's partners, such as local municipalities, offering early "on the scene" expertise where assistance is proactive and not reactive by:

- **creating a planning assistance program which provides "seed" funds to assist local communities in guiding new investment that enhances preservation of historic buildings, village character, and natural areas**
- **establishing an annual public awards program recognizing progressive practices in land use and historic preservation**
- **retaining an economic analyst (e.g., on-call consultant) who can demonstrate the projected fiscal impacts (positive and negative) from a given development proposal; consultant could analyze economic costs and benefits of alternative approaches**
- **providing technical assistance for the protection of critical historic and natural resources (such as lands along either side of the river/canal, critical viewsheds, natural areas which form settings for heritage sites, scenic roads, farmland, etc.)**
- **working with communities to create supportive zoning which directs investment toward established mill complexes and away from environmentally sensitive open land**

**Estimated Capital Development Cost:** \$0  
**Estimated Programming Cost (10 years):** \$1,500,000

### Partnership and leveraging opportunities

Communities, civic groups and individuals struggle every day to retain the special characteristics of their village centers, Main Streets, hilltop settlements, and river corridors. Targeting technical assistance to solve one piece of a larger vision with the commitment or potential for others to take further action is a key strategy for the Commission. For example, in Millbury, the Town desired to redraft an outdated master plan in advance of expected development pressures from the pending Route 146 connection with the Mass Turnpike. Utilizing a nominal amount of Corridor funds, the Town matched those dollars and went on to leverage from state and local businesses more than three times the initial outlay. In the Town of

Blackstone, a Corridor-sponsored planning and design process to tap heritage tourism possibilities along Main Street, led one visionary entrepreneur to buy and renovate the historic Arcade Building as an antique center. The Town added to that effort by securing Community Development Block Grant funds for period street lamps, trees and additional preservation steps.



*Strategic assistance from the Commission can be targeted to protect significant cultural landscapes in advance of threatening circumstances.*

## BLACKSTONE VALLEY INSTITUTE

A key component of the Commission's preservation strategy is the development of educational outreach programs that offer ongoing workshops and courses designed to address key issues facing the Valley. The concept of "Institute" evolved from local people's concerns about growth and community character, economic development, education and environmental conservation. The Commission, through its partnership-driven "Institute" program, would offer local leaders, organizations and interested citizens both a forum to discuss topics of interest or concern and a practical means to find solutions to local issues. Its effectiveness will depend upon a strong commitment from private organizations, the business community, and educational institutions to partner with local, state and Federal government agencies and apply their combined expertise to addressing these local issues.

The proposed Blackstone Valley Institute would offer local officials, community leaders, organizations and interested citizens a forum to discuss topics of concern and practical ways to find solutions to local issues. The Institute could be managed as a direct operation of the Commission with programs offered through various partners throughout the Corridor. Programs would be issue-driven and broad-based, blending expert perspectives from inside and outside the Valley.



Courses and applications would be issue-driven and broad-based. The Commission would facilitate programs that would blend both Valley and national perspectives and take advantage of expertise from the many exceptional resources the northeast region offers. Topics could include:

- an interpretive training course for people that work at heritage sites that would include topics on presentation skills, developing publications, program development, and interpretive planning
- historic preservation planning and preservation treatments
- community development and downtown revitalization
- cultural conservation programs such as collecting oral histories, supporting traditional artisans, festival planning, etc.
- needs assessment for strengthening the organizational capacity of heritage-related non-profits
- grant-writing workshops, presentations by fundraising professionals and foundation representatives
- operational and fundraising strategies to sustain visitor centers and related programming
- workshops targeting builders, Conservation Commissions, Boards of Health and others to address good site development practices
- land protection strategies and open space conservation
- commuter rail development and intermodal transportation service
- environmental awareness and recovery programs that would incorporate environmental curriculum development, sponsorship of river clean-ups, canoeing instruction, etc.

Estimated Capital Development Cost: \$500,000  
 Estimated Programming Cost (10 years): \$2,000,000

## PRESERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMS

The Commission has assumed responsibility not only for interpreting but for identifying and preserving the natural and cultural resources in the Valley that enhance the public's understanding of the American Industrial Revolution. The Commission's funds will be targeted strategically to provide improvements to special places of interpretive value. Investments here will be focused to help visitors understand the Story by:

- providing enhancement funds to targeted interpretive areas for renovation and reuse of historic structures and surrounding landscapes that provide context
- leveraging local banks and community reinvestments to support Commission investments in downtown preservation and revitalization
- providing technical assistance through the National Park Service to key historic sites to address appropriate building rehabilitation practices and materials conservation
- providing technical assistance for preservation of historic landscapes with emphasis on native and historic plant materials

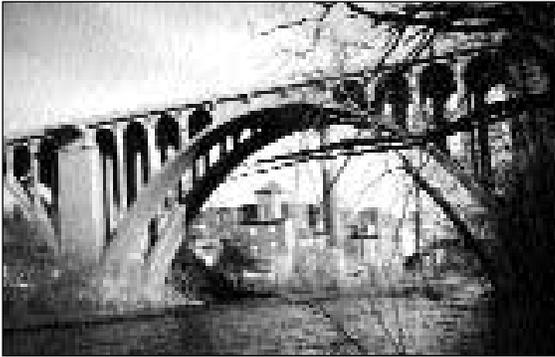
Estimated Capital Development Cost: \$1,500,000

Estimated Programming Cost (10 years): \$400,000



Opportunities exist in downtown areas to leverage the investment of Commission funds with matching support from local financial institutions and municipalities in ways that help to revitalize targeted commercial areas.

# Strategic Development



*The environmental impacts of industrialization on the river have been extensive, creating both challenges and opportunities. Over the next ten years, the Commission will focus on education, support for recovery programs, and programmatic opportunities where the river becomes part of community revitalization through a renewed sense of its recreational value.*

## **Partnership and leveraging opportunities**

Wonderful architectural resources and representative landscapes are woven throughout the Valley. They are icons of their communities and deserve a special measure of protection. Also, the rehabilitation of a key historic structure can be the catalyst for more wide-ranging preservation efforts in a neighborhood or village. The restoration of the Grafton Fire House has spurred interest from neighboring businesses and residents who are now making improvements. Preservation of the Federated Church in Blackstone, part of the mill owners “created” New England village, reaffirmed the Town’s commitment to saving and revealing its special history. In many cases, towns and cities look to Community Development Block Grants to augment individual preservation efforts. Associations or civic groups which support historic buildings as their home have raised funds through their membership and fundraising events to match Commission and state preservation dollars.

## **RIVER RECOVERY AND RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The impacts of the industrial revolution on the river system were extensive, leading today to both challenges and opportunities. The Commission will focus on education, support for recovery programs at the various governmental and grassroots levels, and opportunities for the River to become a vital part of community and economic revitalization by:

- continuing to build a system of River access points where people will have opportunities to fish, canoe, and enjoy passive recreation; create constituencies to maintain and support River access sites, support partner activities, like the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, to build river landings for the Blackstone Valley Explorer
- signing waterways and stenciling storm drains to raise public consciousness of the extent and location of the Blackstone’s complex tributary system
- coordinating nature programming and hiking opportunities with nature centers, such as those operated by the Audubon Society of Rhode Island and Massachusetts
- providing planning and financial assistance to targeted communities that support downtown revitalization through the redevelopment of waterfront properties, e.g. the State pier renovation and riverwalk concept in Pawtucket; other riverfront park and commercial opportunities
- working collaboratively with government agencies and organizations on river recovery programs that support improvements in water quality and quantity, habitat restoration, reintroduction of migratory fish (development of fish ladders at least up to Lonsdale Marsh), and local efforts in environmental education, stream monitoring, and land protection along the River

**Estimated Capital Development Cost: \$1,650,000**

**Estimated Programming Cost (10 years): \$1,000,000**

## **Partnership and leveraging opportunities**

In the past, both river recovery and recreational activities seem to cover the spectrum: very local, volunteer initiatives for river cleanups and trail cutting to far-reaching state and federal efforts to restore fish habitat. In addition to local citizens, municipalities and regional recreational groups like the Bay State Trail Riders have provided the labor to match Commission funds to accomplish

projects, such as making portions of the Southern New England Trunkline Trail accessible. Many of the Commission's targeted river access sites will require volunteer activities ranging from clearing brush to setting steps for canoe launches. More formidable will be the vast array and levels of partnerships and funding support to tackle difficult issues like introducing migratory fish to lower portions of the Blackstone, and addressing failing dam structures which hold back toxic sediments. Both states, the Corridor communities, the business community, the Army Corps of Engineers, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and other federal agencies must be enlisted to champion these serious problems.

#### **A TRANSITIONAL ERA FOR THE COMMISSION**

Congress put in place a Federal Commission, for a span of two ten-year terms, to develop partnerships aimed at preserving, interpreting and enhancing the Blackstone Valley. At the time, there was only one other Heritage Commission in the country. Within a decade, a nationwide movement to develop heritage preservation and development projects ensued. Today, there are many heritage projects that are supported by various types of entities. The establishment of new Federal Commissions has been limited and newly designated entities have taken on the form of non-profits, state coordinated efforts and regional authorities. If current trends hold true over the next decade, the Commission should be prepared to transition itself into a new type of entity(s) that will continue to invest in the preservation and heritage development of the region.

The Blackstone's designation as a National Heritage Corridor will remain but the "Commission's" future after its twentieth year needs further exploration. The Commission's organizational umbrella has enabled it to reach beyond town and state lines and develop a regional approach to preserve, market and interpret the Valley's heritage. The Commission has been encouraged to explore, with its partners, alternative management structures that would continue to carry out the Commission's stewardship role. In looking at various long-term strategies, the Commission will look at ways that each heritage partner can be assured of reaching their goals through partnership which balances centralized and decentralized operations. Ultimately, the desire of the Commission is to ensure that the initiatives of the first two decades are continued and that the Blackstone Valley as a nationally significant landscape is preserved and the quality of life enhanced.

<b>Estimated Capital Development Cost:</b>	<b>\$150,000</b>
<b>Estimated Programming Cost (10 years):</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>

# Summary

## of the Ten Year Program Budget Projections

The Commission's funding authorization of \$5,000,000 requires a 1:1 match. However, in order to achieve the desired goals, a stronger match will be required. The budget projections below indicate a 2:1 partner to Commission match for a total projected budget of just over \$15,000,000. It has been, however, the Commission's experience and will continue to be an objective to leverage these activities further.

<b>Core Commitment</b>	<b>Capitol Development Costs *</b>	<b>Annual Programming Costs *</b>
Heritage Infrastructure	\$ 3,425,000	\$ 1,600,000
Heritage Programming	\$ 150,000	\$ 1,000,000
Strategic Design and Planning Assistance	\$ 0	\$ 1,500,000
Blackstone Valley Institute	\$ 500,000	\$ 2,000,000
Preservation and Enhancement Programs	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 400,000
River Recovery and Recreational Development	\$ 1,650,000	\$1,000,000
Stewardship Transition	\$ 150,000	\$ 500,000
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$ 7,375,000</b>	<b>\$ 8,000,000</b>
<b>Combined Total</b>		<b>\$ 15,375,000</b>

\* Figures are based on a 2:1 Partner to Commission match. These costs do not reflect the annual operating costs for the Commission. All Development funds are targeted to support local grass-roots projects and efforts.

**HISTORIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE**

This plan, The Next Ten Years, is an amendment to the Cultural Heritage and Land Management Plan for the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor approved by the Secretary of the Interior on June 4, 1990. The legislation creating the Corridor, P.L. 99-647, provides no regulatory powers to the Commission. The Commission, as prescribed in Section 9, Duties of Other Federal Entities, has review authority on activities being conducted by other federal entities that directly affect the Corridor.

The purpose and need for the plan amendment is found in P.L. 104-333 Section 901, which 1) extended the term of the commission, 2) added five communities to the Corridor, and 3) authorized funding. This plan amendment affirms the 1990 plan and extends its program to the new communities. The Commission is committed to assuring both environmental and historic compliance on projects in the Corridor as they are implemented.

Federally-funded activities in the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor are subject to compliance requirements under both the

National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. NEPA and the regulations and procedures issued by the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR Parts 1500 - 1508) direct that the federal government consider the impacts of projects which include federal actions. When needed, the Commission assists with environmental and historic compliance at the project level, offering and providing technical and financial assistance to partners as they are funded and ready to implement projects.

The state historic preservation officers and the directors of the Departments of Environmental Management for both Massachusetts and Rhode Island serve as Commissioners that approve, participate in, and are consulted routinely during the implementation of Commission-funded activities within the Corridor.

## Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Natural Resources Inventory and Assessment

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Next 10 Years will be an exciting time of renewed commitments to reveal, preserve and interpret the historical, cultural and natural resources of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor. Natural resources and the systems that link them — geology, hydrology and habitats — are important to the historic and cultural landscapes that we value and wish to preserve. The natural and built environments are inextricably linked. Preserving key natural landscapes enhances historic settings, and protects the natural systems that are shared throughout the Valley and are vital to the region's health.

The Natural Resources Inventory and Assessment is offered as an overview and selective description of the natural significance of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor. The analysis identifies a rich array of the most important sites, and leads to specific recommendations for action.

### THE PURPOSE OF THE INVENTORY IS THUS THREE-FOLD:

- to reveal the natural features and systems of the Corridor which contribute to the understanding of national cultural landscape values;
- to recommend strategies for protection, restoration, management, or acquisition; and
- to provide a framework for local and regional decision-making.

By better understanding the role of natural resources in our history, in our present environment and in our daily well-being, we as individuals and communities will make better decisions for the future. Building on past and on-going efforts to remedy environmental problems, protect land and water for the enjoyment and health of generations,

and unlock the potential of recreational resources, communities in the Valley are actively living their history and shaping their environment.

### Process

To begin the inventory and assessment of the Valley's resources, several maps and sources of information were collected and key people interviewed. An advisory committee was formed, representing agencies involved in natural resource management and private groups involved in resource advocacy and stewardship. A survey was distributed to members of the advisory committee as well as to other interested parties, local communities, non-profit groups and local organizations, asking them to list and describe their priority natural resources sites. A framework for evaluation was developed in the form of a matrix listing sites and allocating categories of Natural Values: Geology, Hydrology, Vegetation and Habitat, categories of Cultural Values: Traditional Land Use, Scenic, and Historic, and categories of Local and Regional Significance. The advisory committee then discussed each of the sites and ascribed to them values of high, medium or low under each category of resource attribute.

### Inventory Matrix

The result of this analysis was an Inventory Matrix of 70 sites, identified on the Natural Resource Sites map in the report. Each site shows a distribution of high, medium or low ranking under categories of Natural and Cultural Value and a description of the issues facing the resource. A sample page of the Inventory Matrix is appended in the report. Sites with highest Natural and Cultural values were culled from the Matrix for further study of their attributes and to develop recommendations for action.

## **LOCAL PLANS AND CORRIDOR INITIATIVES**

To this analysis was added a review of local planning documents, including Open Space and Recreation Plans, as well as the record of past and ongoing initiatives of the Corridor Commission and its partners. These additional sites represent local planning efforts, preservation priorities and projects likely to merit continued support.

### **Regional Impacts**

A review of regional impacts from growth and development pressures on the resources of the Valley was used to evaluate common threats and to refine recommendations. Trends were identified through interviews with regional planners, representatives of regulatory authorities and private non-profit organizations, as well as from published sources. Maps included in this section of the report show Transportation and Growth Patterns, Impacts on Services and Impacts on Water Resources. Two aerial photographs of the region surrounding Ashton and Old Ashton Villages in Cumberland and Lincoln, Rhode Island — one from 1939 and one from 1992 — are used to illustrate changes in the landscape and to discuss the cumulative role of local land use decisions in affecting regional environmental resources.

### **Subregions**

Communities in the Blackstone Valley were grouped into nine subregions. The primary reason to consider smaller sections of the Valley was to examine various natural systems, such as waterways, marshes, forests, etc., in the context of municipalities sharing common ecosystems. There were no dominant criteria for organizing the subregions in a particular way: some communities could have been grouped with another subregion just as easily, emphasizing the connection with a different natural system. The important point of examining subregions is to recognize that municipalities need to cooperate with their neighbors to manage and benefit from natural resources existing across political boundaries.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

More than a list of important sites, the report offers a series of recommendations around key resources, for a variety of public and private actors to undertake.

A description of the natural resource, of the issues affecting it, and of recommended actions for the Corridor Commission and its partners were developed for River sites, Valley sites and other resources grouped by subregion.

River sites (16) include those which were evaluated as having high significance in natural and cultural value, as well as those where past and ongoing initiatives on the part of the Commission and other actors make them particularly noteworthy.

Valley sites (5) were selected from the Inventory as those having high value and also demonstrated past and ongoing initiatives. Other high value sites in the Valley are mentioned in the recommendations by subregion. River and Valley sites are identified on a map of Natural Resources Sites in the Inventory and Assessment report.

Recommendations for 9 subregions include strategies and actions that affect several resources at once and could be more successfully undertaken by communities working together rather than individually. Maps of the 9 Subregions are included in this section, identifying the River and Valley sites of the Inventory Matrix that fall within each subregion, and additional sites, identified in local planning documents, which have important local significance as scenic resources, water resources or key open spaces.

In all, the report contains 70 sites evaluated on the Inventory Matrix, 21 descriptions of unique resources and the issues they face, and well over 100 recommendations for sites and subregions. The result is an assessment of the natural resources of the Blackstone Valley and of the array of local and regional actions, current and suggest-

ed, that promise to be most successful in preserving and enhancing the Corridor's unique assets.

Actions on the part of local communities, federal and state agencies, key institutions, organizations and individuals, with the support and partnership contributions of the Corridor Commission, will result in a healthy natural environment and appropriate land use patterns for the whole Valley. Controlled locally and coordinated regionally, a better-managed landscape of natural resources is an appropriate setting for the preservation, enhancement and appreciation of the cultural and historic resources of a Heritage Corridor with national significance.

#### **SELECTED EXAMPLES OF RECOMMENDATIONS RIVER SITES**

##### **Blackstone Gorge (Blackstone, North Smithfield)**

Assist Massachusetts (MA) and Rhode Island (RI) Departments of Environmental Management (DEM), the Metacomet Land Trust and others in continued land protection in and around the Gorge, and continue to facilitate purchases through conservation organizations like The Conservation Fund.

Continue to convene state and federal resource agencies to address streamflow issues.

##### **Rice City Pond / Goat Hill Lock (Uxbridge)**

Support the engineering evaluations of the MA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) to control pollution at Rice City Pond, and encourage DEP and ACOE to work with MADEM to incorporate DEM concerns into pollution control strategies.

##### **Whitinsville Reservoir System (Sutton, Douglas, Northbridge)**

Encourage the protection of the Whitinsville Reservoir and its watershed in advance of surrounding development.

Incorporate model gravel pit redevelopment into the curriculum of the proposed Blackstone Valley Institute as one Valley-wide issue to tackle.

Encourage efforts like the development of the Linwood Pond Trail by the Town of Northbridge and Conservation Commission for public enjoyment of the Reservoir System.

##### **Lime Rock (Lincoln)**

Initiate a protection and interpretation strategy with the Town, property owners and other partners as soon as possible in anticipation of the cessation of the quarry operations.

Work with the Conklin Lime Co. to help determine a timeline for the actual closing of the quarry to ensure adequate planning for the preservation of the site.

##### **Fisherville Mill and Pond (Grafton)**

Establish Fisherville Mill and Pond as a high priority site as it represents the convergence of several key goals of the Corridor: environmental remediation, historic preservation, economic development, and wildlife habitat restoration.

Support the continued concerted efforts of the public and private groups already involved, and the recruitment of new parties such as: the property owner, the Army Corps of Engineers, the MA DEP and Fish and Wildlife, the Town of Grafton, the Central Massachusetts Economic Development Authority (CMEDA) and advocacy groups such as Ducks Unlimited.

##### **Rockdale Pond (Northbridge)**

Encourage the MADEP and other potential partners to help identify the sources of contamination. Depending on the results, removal of contaminants might be possible.

Encourage the Army Corps of Engineers to apply successful solutions to Rockdale Pond that may emerge from MADEM's investigation of stabilization and bioengineering at Rice City Pond.

**Confluence of Middle and Blackstone Rivers (Worcester)**

Support the development of a continuous Greenway along the River.

Support the development of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor northern Visitor Center, and encourage the City of Worcester, MADEM and additional partners if necessary to devote the area around the convergence, including the northwest corner of the Patriot Metals site, to the Visitor Center, to parkland, to greenway/river access and to interpretation of historic resources.

**VALLEY SITES**

**Intact Western Forests (Douglas, MA, western Burrillville and Glocester, RI)**

Continue to oppose the proposed sanitary landfill in Douglas State Forest as a direct threat to natural and cultural resources significant to the Heritage Corridor.

Support continued land protection of the forests and adjacent properties by the Towns, conservation organizations, and the State DEMs.

Support the development of the North/South Trail by RIDEM as an important recreational feature in the Corridor, and encourage a link to northern portions of the forest.

**Daniel’s Farm (Blackstone)**

Continue to work with the property owner, the Metacomet Land Trust and the Town of Blackstone toward a comprehensive preservation solution.

As an interim step, collaboratively develop a management plan for the property assuming a life estate for the owner.

**Chase Farm (Lincoln)**

Promote the Historic Landscape Assessment Report to the Town of Lincoln and relevant agencies in order to address preservation of the agricultural landscape.

Collaborate with the Town and other property owners to establish a trail network to connect sites along Great Road and interpret the area.

**Waters Farm (Sutton)**

Encourage the Towns of Sutton and Douglas to explore early planning tools to avoid the visual intrusions that infringe on River Bend Farm in Uxbridge

**Purgatory Chasm (Sutton)**

Support continued land protection by MADEM and others around and within the State Park to better secure the resource.

**SUBREGIONS**

**Worcester/Leicester**

Support the City of Worcester, Mass Audubon and others in river protection projects to open or “daylight” brooks and waterways now in culverts. Support in particular the continued investigation of Beaver Brook and Broad Meadow Brook.

Encourage the City to continue to correct problems associated with illegal sewer connections and sewage overflow in the Blackstone River.

Assist the Town of Leicester and the Worcester Airport in reaching agreement on how to mitigate the impacts of airport surface runoff on the surrounding waterway. Issues include silting and the release of de-icing chemicals into the water stream.

Assist communities in the Route 146 corridor in coordinating management approaches to land use issues associated with growth: the new interchange, new employment centers, increased land demand for different uses, stressed water resources and the loss of traditional landscapes.

**Millbury/Grafton**

Assist communities in the Route 146 corridor in coordinating management approaches to land use issues associated with growth: the new interchange, new employment centers, increased land demand for different uses, stressed water resources and the loss of traditional landscapes.

Support the Grafton Land Trust in its efforts to protect land around the Grafton Common, which will preserve natural resources as well as enhance a landmark setting for cultural resources.

**Upton/Hopedale/Mendon**

Support the protection of unique resources such as Peppercorn Hill Fen and Miscoe Spring and the expansion of conservation areas.

Support implementation of “catch and release” angling to ensure sustainable wild trout populations.

**Sutton/Northbridge/Uxbridge/Douglas**

Encourage responsible development throughout the region in the form of compact growth patterns that respect traditional landscapes, a scale of buildings that respects community character and uses that do not degrade natural resources.

Support the implementation and enforcement of the Rivers Protection Act and identify additional wild trout streams in the watershed, to be protected.

**Millville/Blackstone/Woonsocket**

Promote the Technical Assistance Program funded by the Environmental Protection Agency to reduce toxins coming into wastewater treatment facilities through community awareness and participation.

Encourage the ACOE to allow vegetation to become reestablished on rip rap along sections of the Blackstone River in Woonsocket and Blackstone.

**Burrillville/Glocester**

Support towns and RIDEM in protecting farmland and forests to facilitate the implementation of the North/South Trail.

**North Smithfield/Smithfield**

Support efforts to establish Greenways and encourage the National Park Service’s Rivers and Trails program to extend technical support along the Woonasquatucket into Smithfield.

Explore the long-term protection of apple orchards and other farming activities in Smithfield and North Smithfield.

**Cumberland/Lincoln**

Collaborate with the Town of Cumberland to build public support for development strategies which accommodate up to 50% for open space preservation, such as those adopted in Lincoln.

Work with local land trusts and local conservation organizations to protect open space surrounding critical natural resources such as Pine Swamp, the Albion Floodplain forest, Long Brook and Ash Swamp.

**Central Falls/Pawtucket/Providence/**

**East Providence**

Assist communities in working together to encourage cooperation for Greenway development and increased access to the River.

## Public Comments from the New Communities' Welcome Workshops

On March 25, 1997, the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission held a public meeting at the Burrillville High School, with presentations from speakers and workshops among participants, to welcome into the Corridor the new communities of Burrillville, Gloucester and Smithfield. The meeting was well attended and the discussions lively. Below are the summary comments from participants.

### **What are the most important connections and contributions of your community to the American Industrial Revolution?**

- The mills, waterways and railroad routes.
- The dams that created ponds changed the landscape and have recreational potential today.
- Spring Lake as a recreational area specifically established for workers; traditional worker recreational areas still have recreational potential.
- Burrillville as major woolen manufacturer: the mills themselves and the mill villages of Stillwater, Worcester, Harrisville and others.
- The Stillwater Mill Complex which has potential for restoration.
- The influence of Austin Levy as a philanthropic industrialist: he built worker housing at many sites, community buildings in Harrisville, contributions which still survive today.
- The dominant role of Job Armstrong in Gloucester.
- The historic mills of Chepachet and their role in the American Industrial Revolution.
- Both the mills and farms of Smithfield, which was also a transportation center, a busy route to Connecticut.
- Individual stories and history are more important than the sites themselves.
- People of the valley: workers from all ethnic groups – French, Irish, Yankee – and their local folklore.
- Churches. Village identities. Road names that tell history.
- Historic houses of owners and workers.

- The Steere Family.
- The orchards of Apple Valley

### **What critical issues are facing the protection and promotion of your community's historical, cultural and natural resources?**

- Balancing economic and preservation needs.
- New housing developments are changing landscapes.
- Access to the River is needed.
- Need to identify potential railroad lines for use as hiking trails.
- Mill sites should be preserved.
- Brownfields need to be redeveloped: actively market and reuse old mill buildings, for commercial uses, housing, new industrial uses and small businesses.
- Commercial districts and concentrated historic villages need sewerage: cannot rely on septic systems.
- Lack of sewerage in Chepachet in particular is critical, key to further promotion and development.
- Pollution of the Chepachet River is a great concern.
- Difficult to get people to agree on downtown revitalization in Pascoag: potential for partnerships for development and preservation.
- US Route 44: debate around two or four lanes; buildings in Harmony at risk from expansion of Rte 44.
- Effect on Chepachet of widening of routes 102 and 44.
- Increasing traffic is a concern.
- Mills and houses are in danger of arson.
- Burrillville: lack of a land trust.
- Dams in Burrillville are failing or about to fail.
- Zoning regulation: development is strict in Burrillville, but no historic zoning in either historic district.
- Chepachet's historic district has historic zoning.

- Gloucester: the preservation of two historic schools needs technical assistance, options; potential for partnerships.
- Smithfield: establishment of historic districts and land trust is desired; how to develop them?
- Floating island in Waterman & Bowdish.
- Leaking Penstock and Chepachet old mills.
- Opportunities for town support for events - i.e. Whitewater Championships.
- Ways of letting people know what's happening.

**What places or issues were left out of the presentations and are important landmarks in the local and regional community?**

- The stories of Austin Levy and of the mill builder Tinkham.
- Spring Lake Beach and its Arcade.
- The Harrisville Arts Festival.
- Theater groups at Assembly: the Theater Company of Rhode Island, the Shoestring Players.
- The annual Canoe Race from Harrisville to Nasonville (Clear Branch River): part of a series in New England.
- Burrillville: the mills and villages of Oakland and Mapleville, including the Mapleville Historic District.
- Presentation featured too much of Slatersville in North Smithfield.
- Not enough natural features: the Gorge, Georgiaville, Mowery Park, the Spring Cove recreation area.
- Round Top Fishing Tourney.
- Expansion of White Mill Park through land acquisition.
- Consult Walks and Rambles in Rhode Island by Ken Weber.
- The only state-maintained cross-country ski trails in Rhode Island.
- The 200-acre forest in Harrisville.
- The Nipmuc River. Gloucester Heritage Park (Rt. 44). Boat ramps.
- North/South Trail.
- Old railroad bed from Pascoag to Nasonville: possible hike/ bike trail. Burrillville owns a section.

- Clarify boundaries: George Washington Management area and Durfee Hill; Round Top State Park missing; Killingly Pond larger than on the map.
- Ocean State Power is a good neighbor and partner.
- Gloucester: Peckhan Farm at the head of Chepachet River.
- Smithfield: the farming area of Wionkhiege Valley.
- Restoration of Sweeney School.
- Pascoag: the former mill site behind the Credit Union as a potential park.

**What single most important issue will shape the future of your community over the next ten years?**

- Urban sprawl: housing developments, growth patterns, concern over "McDonald Types" in town.
- Protecting historic resources vs. franchises and new development.
- Need to find a balance between residential and commercial development.
- Preservation of open space.
- Public access to river. Promoting youth with the river as a resource.
- New transportation patterns will affect historic downtowns for economic sustainability.
- The expansion of Route 44.
- Sensitive road improvements to preserve village character; i.e. Route 44 in Gloucester.
- Advertising! Connection to the Heritage Corridor a Plus.
- Weakness of the dams: who controls them, who is responsible for repairs?
- Water connection with Towns.
- In Smithfield, Burrillville and Gloucester, find funding for Greenways to protect from large scale land development.
- Gloucester: controlled development based on sewerage plans.
- Burrillville: follow the comprehensive plan.
- No historic district commission in Burrillville to respond to State and local plans.
- Main Street, Pascoag: potential for restoration and economic revitalization.

- Endangered One Room School House in Chepachet.
- Potential park (on private land) acquisition at Tarkiln Pond.
- Land Stripping at sand/gravel operations in Glocester and Burrillville.
- Threat of spills from the Factory Mutual test lab.
- Chemicals from the tire dump in Smithfield.
- Rehabilitation of the mills. Historic roads rehabilitation.
- Education. Taxes and schools. Land and housing values.
- Holistic approach to history rather than village by village.

On March 3, 1997 the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor held a public meeting with presentations and a workshop to welcome two new communities into the Corridor: Worcester and Leicester. The meeting was well attended and the discussions lively. Below are the summary comments from participants.

### **1. What are the most important connections and contributions of Worcester and Leicester to the American Industrial Revolution?**

#### **Worcester**

- Its role as hotbed of entrepreneurialism & inventiveness (e.g., Ichabod Washburn)
- Its contribution to the textile, wire and abrasive industries, especially as center for early wire making
- Its role as an important transportation center for New England
- Diversity of city's former manufacturing economy
- Largest industrial city on non-navigable waterway
- Largest concentration of Three Deckers in New England
- Location on the Blackstone River and Canal.
- The P&W Railroad and its terminal at Union Station
- The craftsmen and artisans who built various local landmarks like Mechanics' Hall.
- Multi-culturalism: mills attracted various ethnic groups (60 languages once spoken here)
- Various ethnic parish churches that could be promoted as part of city's ethnic history (e.g., St. John's on Temple Street for Irish history)

#### **Leicester, MA**

- The carding industry and its related tanning and wire industries.
- Pliny Earl and Ichabod Washburn, key founders of the carding industry which contributed to success of cotton-manufacturing.
- Diversity of housing for workers & owners (Cherry Valley)
- Kettle Brook area as municipal reservoir system for Worcester
- Kettle Brook area as former Quaker community connected to Earl and Washburn families

## **2. What critical issues are facing the protection and promotion of Worcester's and Leicester's historical, cultural and natural resources?**

### **Worcester**

- Worcester's ongoing projects need integration into Heritage Corridor's strategic master plan
- City park system is historically significant; needs maintenance but city funding limited (e.g., Middle River is little known park; needs better promotion)
- How are traditions of older ethnic neighborhoods interpreted when they are changing/dispersing?
- Flooding issues in Green Island neighborhood
- Need to restore vitality of neighborhoods (properties being abandoned/demolished)
- Redevelopment of Union Station
- Reclaiming urban "brownfields"
- Expansion and promotion of existing recreational resources
- Continue to improve water quality of streams and river
- Need to maintain & upgrade water supply infrastructure
- Need to connect municipal bike-trail system to the Blackstone Bikeway

### **Leicester**

- Leicester lacks process for raising public awareness of historic and natural resources
- Recognizing what's important to local residents vs. what's important to visitors
- An emerging bedroom community that will need growth planning and historical preservation efforts to maintain its rural/small-town character
- Need central clearinghouse for information on environmental and historic preservation issues
- Growth pressure on remaining undeveloped land
- Promoting commercial development (not industrial development) while preserving rural feel
- Rochdale's historic church is threatened.
- Need for passive recreational trails in Kettle Brook Reservoir area (How to allow public use and not abuse?)
- Heritage Corridor Commission's signage program needs to be extended to added communities
- Need to create more permanent open space
- Kettle Brook area as important natural resource
- Mid-State Trail needs development and connection to Blackstone Bikeway
- Several historic mills, like Smith's and Chapel's and the Knitting Mill, need preservation and re-use
- Need to add Olney Pond to Towtaid Park
- Making sure Leicester isn't treated as "stepchild"

**3. What important places, assets or issues were omitted from the presentations that are “landmarks” to your communities?**

**Worcester**

- The support of Clark University
- Worcester as important college community (need to involve more colleges in heritage efforts)
- Worcester Diners
- Worcester Art Museum
- Rebuilding & preserving Quinsigamond Village through connection to Rt. 146 Mass Pike interchange
- BV minor league baseball
- The restoration of the Quinsigamond Firehouse and School
- Norton Company
- Seven Hills
- Green Island
- Worcester as a college community
- Coes and Patches Reservoir
- Strong ethnic roots and sense of heritage
- Worcester as manufacturing city with strong entrepreneurship (past and present)
- Opportunities for interpreting and celebrating ethnic cultures

**Leicester**

- Towtaid Park in Cherry Valley
- Valley Falls and its three mill sites
- The Kettle Brook area between Main & Stafford
- Historical contributions of the Green family
- Mt. Pleasant Farm
- Historic Greenville Public Library
- Hope Cemetery in Middle River
- Headwaters of Blackstone River as an important natural resource (Kettle Brook area)

**4. What most important issue will shape the future of your community over the next 10 years?**

**Worcester**

- Rt. 146/Mass Pike connection and park features
- Revitalization of Union Station
- Commuter potential between Boston & Worcester
- Transportation network opportunities & problems
- Increased opportunities for parks & green space recreational & open space
- The need for political unanimity, cooperation, leadership & vision
- Protection of the waterways
- Funding resources & limitations
- Rebuilding Worcester’s once prominent manufacturing heritage (i.e., good paying jobs)
- Bringing minorities into the life & soul of the city
- Improved public education
- New changes in Downtown (Convention Center & Medical City) - good or bad?

**Leicester**

- Extension of sewer line along Rt. 9; requires comprehensive plan for new growth to follow
- Balancing growth & development and keeping rural quality in Leicester (Will large development projects improve or degrade quality of life?)
- Planned reuse of mill sites
- Transportation network opportunities & problems
- The need for political unanimity, cooperation, leadership & vision
- Protection of the waterways