



## United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park  
401-318-7155  
67 Roosevelt Avenue

IN REPLY REFER TO

March 17, 2023

Dr. Robert Billington  
President  
Blackstone Valley Tourism Council  
1420 Broad Street 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Central Falls, Rhode Island, 02863

**RE: NPS statement of impact regarding the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center operations**

Dear Dr. Billington,

Please allow this letter to serve as a letter of impact on the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center operations at 175 Main Street, Pawtucket, RI 02860. The National Park Service's Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park acquired the Old Slater Mill in March of 2021, directly across the street from the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center. Blackstone River National Historical Park treasures our relationship with the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and applauds their efforts in providing the community and its visitors with an environment designed for year-round education and engagement.

Since moving in, we have noted that the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center has provided visitors to the National Park, as well as Pawtucket as a whole, a great indoor space to learn about the valley in a year-round manner that we cannot provide at Slater Mill. With operating hours of the National Park limited to the summer and fall seasons, the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center has been able to welcome visitors and residents of Pawtucket when our site cannot. The Blackstone Valley Visitor Center has also provided indoor space for our Park and our partners during inclement weather events. The flexibility of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council in allowing us to use the visitor center has allowed us to follow through with programming that would have been impossible to provide otherwise. Another significant benefit of the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center is its large theatre used to orient visitors to the history of Pawtucket. The theatre alone is larger than our visitor contact station at Old Slater Mill, providing an experience we would miss if the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center were closed.

Aside from the facility use, visitors of the City of Pawtucket will also be missing a local's recommendation for local businesses if the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center were to close. Due to ethical considerations, when visitors visit the National Park, we cannot give preference to one business over another when guests ask for recommendations. When visitors go to the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center, they can ask people from the community about the businesses in the

community, providing the opportunity for their time and money to be spent on locally owned companies.

Without the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center, residents and visitors of Pawtucket will find a significant gap in interpretive offerings for a large portion of the year. There may be more options for these visitors in other parts of the state; however, the City of Pawtucket may see a steady decrease in visitation during the winter months due to its absence. Our site will likely have more canceled programs during summer due to inclement weather. Due to the lack of restrooms and available facilities, we will need to cap significant events, such as the ZAP The Blackstone 50th Celebration. In summary- the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center has created a fantastic opportunity for the Park to complete several missions. We believe that the community of Pawtucket will suffer severely if the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center is forced to close its doors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Wm. Eric Breitzkreutz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'W'.

Wm. Eric Breitzkreutz  
Superintendent