

DATE: November 4, 2024
TO: TOWN COUNCIL
FROM: Alayne White + Jeff Hirsch; Co Chairs Explore Bristol
RE: EXPLORE BRISTOL OVERVIEW OF 2024 JUNE-OCTOBER

Included in this summary is the work we have been doing on all things EXPLORE BRISTOL.

Jeff, Corey and I, along with Barbara Robinson who manages the checking account for us, work closely to make sure that all of these moving parts are moving in a positive direction.

We fully realize that the more we grow this, the more hands we will need.

The goal for now is to get everything working exactly as we want it and to develop systems to grow a team of volunteers who are willing and enthusiastic to help make this EXPLORE BRISTOL brand an award winning experience.

We have only just begun!

Thank you for your trust and your patience in this process and we are really looking forward to 2025 and beyond.

Sincerely,
Alayne White + Jeff Hirsch
Co Chairs Explore Bristol

WHAT WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED:

What a whirlwind. This year has been about CLEAN UP and REBUILDING THE FOUNDATION.

WEBSITE

Reorganized and classified the entire EXPLORE BRISTOL website-

- This took a good twelve weeks to get the information updated and old information deleted.
- Began creating a new website that we have total control over on WIX with new branding and ease of use. This will go live soon.

Determining Gaps

- Actively filling in the gaps based on email inquiries. For example, many inquiries are about boat charters.
- With the help of Joe Brito and Jim Dollins, they directed me in the direction of some captains to begin adding this very important business element to the site.
- Learning to utilize key words more effectively.
- Met with Greg Marsilli to improve ways to use our very improved waterfront as an advantage to the business community.
- **Need visitor center- could this be added to Harbor front?**

Email Inquiries from website

- Personally respond to each and every inquiry that comes from EX BRISTOL WEBSITE (about 5 per week)
- This allows for us as a tourist attraction to stand out to visitors from not only an interesting place to visit, but one that offers incredible customer care. Testimonials have been rolling in and

I am happy to share if requested. (Didn't want to bog you down with too much info.)

Reconnected with businesses to help gain some traction on the importance of EXPLORE BRISTOL site and using the conversations as connectors for businesses to join BMA. This has been a great opportunity to start fresh together.

BMA + COLLABORATION

Collaborated and began working much more closely with BMA.

- Heather Pacheco and I took it upon ourselves to literally drive all over Bristol and finally make a master list of every single business with their information.
- This is now a working list that aids us in keeping our information up to date.
- We created systems to make this easier for regular updates utilizing Corey Silva, our web/marketing point person who keeps this organized for ease and if we need to pass the torch on to another volunteer later.

EXPLORE BRISTOL MAP

- BMA + EB joined forces and formed a map working group to completely revamp the existing map with EAST BAY MEDIA GROUP.
- With an ambitious redesign and a massive reduction in ads as well as including the entire town rather than just a few streets, the new and very improved map is on its way to great things. We are expecting to launch this earlier than usual- March /April 2025.
- We have secured a full match from DISCOVER NEWPORT. This cost will eliminate much of the advertisements which take up a lot of space and distract from the map.

- An interactive map will also be added to the new website so it will be easy to keep that fully updated throughout the year rather than the print which can only be updated annually.
- Plan is to add a small and functional walking map for 2025.

LOU HAMMOND + MEDIA/PRESS*

- Working with Lou Hammond is valuable because their reputation and reach is well beyond what a volunteer tourism organization is capable of.
- After the experience with Fox Television's 2 day media blitz, media is the real way to gain momentum and fresh perspective on BRISTOL.
- It is not just a one and done, but ongoing and cumulative. This is the challenge with media on this level, it is hard to track ROI, but if we are to be taken seriously for tourism and awareness about what makes Bristol special, we must march forth with a PR firm in some capacity.
- Jeff and Alayne began meeting every other Tuesday with the LOU HAMMOND TEAM, to review their needs from us, what pitches they have done and are doing. *See attached summary.

Who is our market?

- Local- Aquidneck Island, Tiverton, L. Compton, Jamestown, Southern RI
- Southeastern Massachusetts, New York, etc, RWU parents, Northern New England
- Gas tank away
- Visitors from far and near

What are we trying to accomplish with this press?

- Hits and highlights that make visitors want to take the drive
- Building relationships with travel writers for long term press
- Highlights of quaint spaces and stores to get traffic to Bristol

What are the short -term goals?

- Building credibility and trust with the businesses that EXPLORE BRISTOL is worth the time and energy for a tourism site in our town
- Develop relationships with DISCOVER NEWPORT, (Stephen Brigidi and Kathryn Farrington who Alayne works closely with) PROVIDENCE CVB, GO PROVIDENCE. (Jeff serves on board)
- Improve placement of kiosks and add to key areas as well as update the maps within the kiosks.

They are dated and need to be changed.

- Expand social media presence. Alayne hired a content creator to specifically work with Instagram- She is an experienced SM influencer interested in helping us improve our presence. She was referred by Providence Tourism. Her name is Kaye Mandeville.

What are the long- term goals?

- Improve website and create Bristol experience that make visitors enjoy their experience when they find us.
- Work on themed events to join forces with already successful events happening in town- ie Daffodil Days, 250 year celebration, Birds at Blithewold etc.
- Use the list of National Days and travel trends given to us by LOU HAMMOND GROUP to develop our own local experiences.

How do we impress upon businesses the answer to the question- WIFM? (What's in it for me?)

- Consistent messaging with BRISTOL BLASTS, Slow and steady, rebuilding brand and community will take time, but we are already beginning to see interest.
- Show what we are doing and keep doing it.
- Connect and Collaborate, walking around and talking with businesses and hearing their challenges helps BMA and Explore Bristol determine what we need to do improve the business climate, create more traffic into town, but always keeping in mind that what makes Bristol Bristol is the charm and authenticity. Leadership is all highly conscious of this and work hard to ensure there is a balance.

EXPLORE BRISTOL BRAND

- Logo redesigned for 2025 launch (we realized in our searches that the word 'RHODE ISLAND' was not part of the logo, (yikes).
- New website that we have total control over is in the process of being built so we can step away from TOWN SQUARE which is a limited web host that doesn't allow us to get in and make our own changes.
- Weekly Bristol Blast to summarize all that is going on and building community from this email list.
- Goal is 5000 emails by DECEMBER 2025. (So spread the word!)

SOCIAL MEDIA

Though social media is certainly one of the primary ways tourists search for key experiences and travel, what is important alongside of these tools, is to build a brand with emails that we own.

Social media does not do this. As great as it is to have followers and is certainly an important tool for tourism, EMAIL campaigns make a difference too.

Websites matter because we own them, not the social media companies. I never want to lose site of the value of owning our own email lists.

WOW. A lot has happened. A lot is going to happen. BMA and Explore Bristol are collaborating more than ever. Heather Pacheco and Nicki Tyska are now co-chairs. Joe Caron, treasurer, Holy Dirks, Secretary. 2025 is going to show the fruits of the labor.

*PRESS AND MEDIA SUMMARY JUNE-SEPTEMBER 2024

FOX NEWS – Summer 2024

READERS DIGEST- Fall 2024

EYE WITNESS GUIDE TO NE -UK Book annual 2025

THE RHODE SHOW- Tim Sweeney Interview- Summer

The Lonely Planet

9/19/24

The coziest small US towns to visit this fall

Unique Monthly Visitors/ Circ. 3,715,729

Advertising Value Equivalent \$21,365

<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/articles/small-towns-usa-fall>

BestLife

9/10/2024

15 Secret Places to See Fall Foliage
in the U.S.

Unique Monthly Visitors/ Circ. 1,477,369

Advertising Value Equivalent \$8,494

<https://bestlifeonline.com/secret-places-in-us-to-see-fall-foliage/>

Food & Wine

9/17/2024

Rhode Island's State Shellfish Is the Secret Ingredient for Clear Clam
Chowder

Unique Monthly Visitors/ Circ. 13,734,891

Advertising Value Equivalent \$78,975.6

<https://www.foodandwine.com/quahog-rhode-island-8713573>

UPCOMING

- New York Lifestyle – Story resulting from Laurie Wilson's visit

PITCHES

MEDIA RELATIONS HIGHLIGHTS

- **Pitches** – LHG conducted proactive pitching to national and regional media utilizing the following topics:
 - o Distributed pitch highlighting Bristol unique and historic inns
 - o Distributed pitch highlighting Bristol's fall foliage offerings, including to the Today Show
 - o Pitched Mount Hope Farm as an agrotourism destination
 - o Pitched Bristol's historic 4th of July parade
 - o Nominated Bristol's Bradford-Diamond-Norris-House for Best Inn in Boston Magazine Travel Awards
 - o Pitched Bristol haunted sites in Bristol for Halloween travel
 - o Pitching Bristol Christmas Festival for holiday travel

- **Outreach** –

- o Bristol pitched to over 100 media, including: Chloe Arrojado (AFAR), Shannon McMahon (Conde Nast Traveler), Elizabeth Rhodes (Travel + Leisure), Pam Wright (Boston Globe), and more.

MEDIA VISITS

- Agency identified and made recommendations on hosting media, either whom the agency proactively pitched or from whom we received requests. By investigating their demographics, aesthetic, engagement, etc. to determine if it was going to provide value to the property. LHG provided recommendations on the below:

- Completed:
 - o **Laurie Wilson**, New York Lifestyle Magazine 19-21st August
 - o **Adam Callaghan**, Food & Wine/Eater/Punch, 25 August
 - o Distributed invitations to A-List New England travel writers including, Necee Regis, Jonathan Soroff, Diane Bair, Pam Wright, Moira McCarthy, Christine Chitnis, Alexis Kelly, Laura Dana Redman, Todd Plummer, and Charlie Hobbs.

ONGOING INITIATIVES

- Managed all incoming media requests and responded with details on Explore Bristol.

STATS:

TOWN SQUARE doesn't offer the types of deep dive that the new website will, but just some basic comparison.

TOTAL SITE VIEWS have more than doubled.

January-October 2023

31,394

January-October 2024

77,158

KEY WORD SEARCHES are the biggest area of improvement we must focus on to drill down to the best way for tourists to find what they are looking for.

Corey and I will spend some time on ensuring that the key words are being utilized in the most efficient way for best ROI.

REQUEST FOR BUDGET LINE ITEM CHANGE: Would it be possible to move the budget line item from ***General*** to ***Meals and Beverage*** revenue line item?

We hope that you feel that the money invested from the town has been well spent. We are excited about the growth of this project. Should anyone on the council have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out.

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