

HOUSE No. 3149

By Mr. Swan of Springfield, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 3149) of Benjamin Swan and others for legislation to authorize the acquisition of land for the development and construction of an underground railroad, and a civil rights and black heritage museum in the city of Springfield. Tourism, Arts and Cultural Development.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Benjamin Swan

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the passage of the accompanying bill:

An Act to authorize the acquisition of land, the development and construction of an underground railroad, civil rights and black heritage museum and cultural center in Springfield.

PETITION OF:

NAME:

Benjamin Swan

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

11th Hampden

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION

SEE HOUSE, NO. 3414 OF 2007-2008.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year Two Thousand and Nine

AN ACT TO AUTHORIZE THE ACQUISITION OF LAND, THE DEVELOPMENT AND CONSTRUCTION OF AN UNDERGROUND RAILROAD, CIVIL RIGHTS AND BLACK HERITAGE MUSEUM AND CULTURAL CENTER IN SPRINGFIELD.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 SECTION 1. It is hereby found and declared that presently within Western Massachusetts there exists the need for a
2 museum and cultural center with twelve thousand square feet of space to be used as a center to educate the public
3 and serve as a resource center for schools, colleges and public and private agencies and organizations, and
4 individuals regarding the historical significance of this part of the Commonwealth to the success of the Underground
5 Railroad, Civil Rights Movement in America and the role of African Americans in development of the Western
6 Massachusetts region.

7 It is hereby further found and declared that the construction and development of such center is needed in
8 order to further enhance regional tourism, attract conferences and conventions, and large gatherings to Springfield,
9 thereby generating an influx of people from outside the Commonwealth who would utilize the tourist facilities and
10 related businesses in every region of the Commonwealth.

11 It is hereby further found and declared that the construction and development of such a center in the city of
12 Springfield will serve as a catharsis important to alleviate some of the lingering negative effects of the institution of
13 slavery and the discrimination practiced against African Americans, which had state and federal governmental
14 statutory sanction.

15 SECTION 2. For the planning, financing, development, and construction of the new center in the
16 Commonwealth, the sum of \$12 million dollars is hereby made available, for the purpose and subject to the
17 provisions of law regulating the disbursements of public funds and the approval thereof.

18 SECTION 3. The following words and phrases, as used in this act, shall, unless the context otherwise
19 requires, have the following meanings:

20 "Project," the acquisition, development, construction, expansion, rehabilitation, improvement, furnishing,
21 equipping, or finishing, or a combination of the foregoing, or operation, promotion, and maintenance, of a museum
22 and cultural center in Springfield containing twelve thousand square feet of space for exhibition, display, conference
23 rooms and related furnishings, furniture, machinery, equipment, facilities, approaches, driveways, parking facilities,
24 which shall not exceed two hundred passenger automobile spaces, roadways, public transportation, planting and
25 landscaping, the acquisition of land or other property, or rights, easements, and interests acquired for or in respect of

26 any such land or property, the demolition or removal of any buildings or structures on land so acquired or in or with
27 respect to which interests are so acquired and site preparation.

28 "Mason Square," so-called, in area within the city of Springfield shall be the site for locating the center.

29 "Operator," the person, corporation, authority, company, group or entity, whether private or public, entering
30 into contract with the Commonwealth to manage, operate and maintain the new center as authorized and directed in
31 this act.

32 SECTION 4. Within ninety days of the effective date of this act, the Department of Capital Planning and
33 Operations, hereinafter called the "commissioner," shall conduct or contract for due diligence studies, and prepare a
34 report and preliminary specifications which shall include the following:

- 35 (a) Preliminary specifications for a museum and cultural center suitable for small permanent displays, scale
36 conferences, art and photographic exhibits, library, and a theatre to accommodate small audiences to be
37 built in the Mason Square Area of Springfield.
- 38 (b) The preliminary specifications shall be developed and prepared in consultation with the African-
39 American Museum and Cultural Center of Western Massachusetts and the city of Springfield, shall
40 include the design, physical, and operating characteristics which the facility shall contain, a precise
41 estimate of the costs of construction, and such other details or criteria relative to the construction of a
42 building for use as a museum and cultural center.
- 43 (c) (b) Certified appraisals of land to be acquired and assembled for the project, including relocation
44 of existing structures and businesses.
- 45 (d) (c) Studies of area wide traffic impact, transit requirements, necessary or desirable traffic
46 changes for pedestrian and vehicular access, improvements for pedestrian safety, the accommodation of
47 on-site parking not to exceed two hundred parking spaces and costs of all of the above; provided,
48 however, that such studies may, at the direction of the Commissioner, in consultation with the city of
49 Springfield.
- 50 (d) Establish criteria, requirements, duties and financial responsibilities of an operator to operate
51 and maintain the center constructed pursuant to this act.