

HOUSE No. 3414

By Mr. Swan of Springfield, petition 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

PETITION OF:

Benjamin Swan
Elizabeth A. Malia

William N. Brownsberger
Christine E. Canavan

In the Year Two Thousand and Seven.

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
- 2 Western Massachusetts there exists the need for a museum and cul-
- 3 tural center with twelve thousand square feet of space to be used as a
- 4 center to educate the public and serve as a resource center for
- 5 schools, colleges and public and private agencies and organizations,
- 6 and individuals regarding the historical significance of this part of
- 7 the Commonwealth to the success of the Underground Railroad,
- 8 Civil Rights Movement in America and the role of African Ameri-
- 9 cans in development of the Western Massachusetts region.
- 10 It is hereby further found and declared that the construction and
- 11 development of such center is needed in order to further enhance
- 12 regional tourism, attract conferences and conventions, and large
- 13 gatherings to Springfield, thereby generating an influx of people

14 from outside the Commonwealth who would utilize the tourist facilities and related businesses in every region of the Commonwealth.

15 It is hereby further found and declared that the construction and
16 development of such a center in the city of Springfield will serve as
17 a catharsis important to alleviate some of the lingering negative
18 effects of the institution of slavery and the discrimination practiced
19 against African Americans, which had state and federal govern-
20 mental statutory sanction.
21

1 SECTION 2. For the planning, financing, development, and con-
2 struction of the new center in the Commonwealth, the sum of \$12
3 million dollars is hereby made available, for the purpose and subject
4 to the provisions of law regulating the disbursements of public funds
5 and the approval thereof.

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

4 “Project,” the acquisition, development, construction, expansion,
5 rehabilitation, improvement, furnishing, equipping, or finishing, or a
6 combination of the foregoing, or operation, promotion, and mainte-
7 nance, of a museum and cultural center in Springfield containing
8 twelve thousand square feet of space for exhibition, display, confer-
9 ence rooms and related furnishings, furniture, machinery, equipment,
10 facilities, approaches, driveways, parking facilities, which shall not
11 exceed two hundred passenger automobile spaces, roadways, public
12 transportation, planting and landscaping, the acquisition of land or
13 other property, or rights, easements, and interests acquired for or in
14 respect of any such land or property, the demolition or removal of
15 any buildings or structures on land so acquired or in or with respect
16 to which interests are so acquired and site preparation.

17 “Mason Square,” so-called, in area within the city of Springfield
18 shall be the site for locating the center.

19 “Operator,” the person, corporation, authority, company, group or
20 entity, whether private or public, entering into contract with the
21 Commonwealth to manage, operate and maintain the new center as
22 authorized and directed in this act.

1 SECTION 4. Within ninety days of the effective date of this act,
2 the Department of Capital Planning and Operations, hereinafter
3 called the “commissioner,” shall conduct or contract for due dili-
4 gence studies, and prepare a report and preliminary specifications
5 which shall include the following:—

6 (a) Preliminary specifications for a museum and cultural center
7 suitable for small permanent displays, scale conferences, art and
8 photographic exhibits, library, and a theatre to accommodate small
9 audiences to be built in the Mason Square Area of Springfield.

10 The preliminary specifications shall be developed and prepared in
11 consultation with the African-American Museum and Cultural
12 Center of Western Massachusetts and the city of Springfield, shall
13 include the design, physical, and operating characteristics which the
14 facility shall contain, a precise estimate of the costs of construction,
15 and such other details or criteria relative to the construction of a
16 building for use as a museum and cultural center.

17 (b) Certified appraisals of land to be acquired and assembled for
18 the project, including relocation of existing structures and busi-
19 nesses.

20 (c) Studies of area wide traffic impact, transit requirements, nec-
21 essary or desirable traffic changes for pedestrian and vehicular
22 access, improvements for pedestrian safety, the accommodation of
23 on-site parking not to exceed two hundred parking spaces and costs
24 of all of the above; provided, however, that such studies may, at the
25 direction of the Commissioner, in consultation with the city of
26 Springfield.

27 (d) Establish criteria, requirements, duties and financial responsi-
28 bilities of an operator to operate and maintain the center constructed
29 pursuant to this act.