STATE OF NEW YORK

10592

IN ASSEMBLY

March 13, 2026

Introduced by M. of A. ZINERMAN -- read once and referred to the Committee on Tourism, Parks, Arts and Sports Development

AN ACT in relation to establishing the Bedford-Stuyvesant cultural district; creating the Bedford-Stuyvesant cultural district stakeholders council and youth cultural leadership council; providing for planning, preservation, cultural programming, economic empowerment, and capital development; and making an appropriation therefor

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. Short title. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Bedford-Stuyvesant cultural district act".

§ 2. Legislative findings and intent. The legislature finds and declares that:

1. Bedford-Stuyvesant has been, and remains, one of the most significant centers of Black cultural production, creativity, and community building in New York state and the nation. Historic institutions-including the Fulton Art Fair, The East, the Billie Holiday Theatre, the African art museums, community galleries, performance collectives, and independent cultural workers-have shaped visual arts, jazz, poetry, Black theater, dance, literature, fashion, and political thought for more than seventy years.

2. Despite this legacy, generations of artists and cultural organizations have faced displacement, underinvestment, and loss of affordable creative spaces, threatening the continuation of Bed-Stuy's artistic ecosystem.

3. The legislature further finds that intentional, community-driven investment will preserve this heritage, promote cultural and economic development, expand opportunities for youth, strengthen public institutions, and ensure that artists and cultural organizations can live, work, and thrive in the communities they helped build.

4. It is therefore the intent of the legislature to:

(a) Designate NYC assembly district 56 as the Bedford-Stuyvesant cultural district,

EXPLANATION--Matter in *italics* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

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(b) Establish a governing body-the Cultural District Stakeholders Council-composed of artists, cultural institutions, community partners, and residents,

(c) Support a youth council to prepare the next generation of cultural leaders,

(d) Provide sustained operational and capital funding to secure Bed-Stuy's cultural infrastructure for decades to come, and

(e) Preserve and celebrate Bedford-Stuyvesant's Black culture.

§ 3. Establishment of the Bedford-Stuyvesant cultural district. 1. There is hereby established the Bedford-Stuyvesant cultural district, encompassing the geographic boundaries of New York state assembly district 56.

2. The district shall serve as an officially recognized zone dedicated to:

(a) cultural preservation and celebration;

(b) arts education and workforce development;

(c) creative placekeeping and placemaking and public arts installations;

(d) support for cultural institutions, historic sites, independent artists, and creative entrepreneurs; and

(e) promotion of local heritage tourism and cultural commerce.

§ 4. Bedford-Stuyvesant cultural district stakeholders council. 1. There is hereby created the Bedford-Stuyvesant cultural district stakeholders council (hereinafter referred to as "the council"). The Laundromat Project shall serve as the founding administrative partner, and the Billie Holiday Theatre shall serve as the fiscal sponsor, during the initial formation period of the cultural district, until such time as the cultural district establishes an independent governance and administrative structure.

2. (a) The council shall operate in accordance with a community-led governance model, under which decision-making authority, priorities, and stewardship of cultural district resources are centered in and accountable to Bedford-Stuyvesant cultural institutions, arts organizations, historic cultural sites, and cultural leaders.

(b) The council shall consist of the following:

(i) founding members, defined as the organizations and cultural leaders that convened in two thousand twenty-five to initiate the planning and development of the Bedford-Stuyvesant cultural district and that are representative of Bedford-Stuyvesant cultural institutions, arts organizations, historic cultural sites, and cultural leaders. Founding members shall constitute a majority of the council and shall retain exclusive voting authority over the activities, priorities, membership and strategic direction of the cultural district;

(ii) government representatives, including:

(1) two members appointed by the assembly committee on tourism, parks, arts and sports development;

(2) one member appointed by the senate committee on cultural affairs, tourism, parks and recreation; and

(3) one representative from the New York city department of cultural affairs, all of whom shall serve in an ex officio, non-voting, advisory capacity. Government representatives may participate in discussions, provide technical assistance, and facilitate coordination with relevant public agencies, but shall not vote on council matters and shall not be counted toward quorum; and

(iii) additional council members that may be added upon the recommendation of a founding member. Such additions shall be subject to an

application process and approval by a two-thirds vote of the council. Applicants shall demonstrate a history of sustained engagement with, and accountability to, Bedford-Stuyvesant communities, and a commitment to ensuring that cultural district resources are directed toward community benefit rather than private or extractive use. New members may include, but shall not be limited to:

(1) independent artists and cultural workers;
(2) preservationists, historians, and community archivists;
(3) representatives from community-based organizations;
(4) local business and economic development partners; and
(5) faith-based and intergenerational cultural leaders.

3. The council shall:

(a) develop a ten-year cultural district master plan, including:
(i) cultural facilities mapping and infrastructure needs;
(ii) affordable artist housing and creative workspace strategies;
(iii) preservation of historic and cultural assets;
(iv) arts education and youth workforce pipelines;
(v) public arts and creative placemaking plans;
(vi) cultural tourism and small-business development strategies; and
(vii) annual investment and sustainability forecasts;
(b) administer annual cultural investment grants to artists, cultural institutions, and collectives;
(c) recommend capital priorities for state and city investment;
(d) advocate for local, state, federal, and philanthropic funding; and
(e) publish an annual state of the district report to the legislature and the public.

§ 5. Bedford-Stuyvesant youth cultural leadership council. 1. The council shall establish a youth cultural leadership council, composed of youth aged fourteen to twenty-four residing in the cultural district.

2. The youth cultural leadership council shall:

(a) advise on youth arts programming, workforce development, and cultural education;
(b) co-design youth-led creative placemaking projects;
(c) participate in budget recommendations and master planning; and
(d) serve as cultural ambassadors for the district.

§ 6. Funding and appropriations. 1. From funds appropriated for the purposes of this act for fiscal year 2026-2027, the sum of five million dollars ($5,000,000) shall support:

(a) council administration and staffing;
(b) community planning processes;
(c) grants to cultural organizations and artists;
(d) youth cultural leadership council stipends, leadership training, and programming; and
(e) economic empowerment and technical assistance to cultural entrepreneurs.

2. From funds appropriated for the purposes of this act, the sum of twenty million dollars ($20,000,000) shall support:

(a) rehabilitation and expansion of cultural institutions;
(b) creation of affordable artist housing and workspaces;
(c) preservation of historic and cultural landmarks;
(d) public art installations and cultural corridors; and
(e) development of new cultural and community spaces.

3. State funds may be used to leverage:

(a) city capital investments;
(b) federal cultural preservation grants;
(c) philanthropic and private contributions; and

(d) community development financial institution support.

§ 7. Interagency collaboration. The New York state council on the arts, empire state development, the department of state, and the office of parks, recreation and historic preservation shall collaborate with the council to:

1. provide technical assistance;
2. support cultural tourism development;
3. offer arts workforce and small-business programming;
4. facilitate designation of cultural landmarks; and
5. promote statewide visibility of the Bedford-Stuyvesant cultural district.

§ 8. Reporting requirements. The council shall submit an annual report to the governor, the speaker of the assembly, the majority leader of the senate, and the chairs of relevant committees on:

1. cultural district activities;
2. grant recipients and impacts;
3. capital investments;
4. youth cultural leadership council programming;
5. economic and cultural development outcomes; and
6. recommendations for further legislative or budgetary action.

§ 9. The sum of twenty-five million dollars ($25,000,000), or so much thereof as may be necessary, is hereby appropriated to the council on the arts out of any moneys in the state treasury in the general fund to the credit of the Bedford-Stuyvesant cultural district, not otherwise appropriated, and made immediately available, for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this act. Such moneys shall be payable on the audit and warrant of the comptroller on vouchers certified or approved by the chairperson of the council on the arts in the manner prescribed by law.

§ 10. Severability clause. If any clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, section or part of this act shall be adjudged by any court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid, such judgment shall not affect, impair, or invalidate the remainder thereof, but shall be confined in its operation to the clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, section or part thereof directly involved in the controversy in which such judgment shall have been rendered. It is hereby declared to be the intent of the legislature that this act would have been enacted even if such invalid provisions had not been included herein.

§ 11. This act shall take effect immediately.