

Mayor Announces Effort To Establish Cultural District Downtown



City Aims to Establish State Designated Cultural District in Downtown New Bedford

Mayor Jon Mitchell announced Monday that the City of New Bedford is undertaking an effort to establish a state-designated Cultural District in the city's downtown that will further enrich arts and cultural activities for residents and visitors alike. While the Cultural District designation may not immediately bring new funding into the City, the expectation is that it will bring more resources in the future and could place New Bedford in a priority position for funding opportunities. The Mayor has convened a Steering Committee comprised of a mix of arts, culture, and business representative to move the application process forward. The Committee is co-chaired by Mark Hess and Mike Metzler.

"More and more frequently, New Bedford is recognized as a

destination for its vibrant arts and culture scene, rich history, and working waterfront. These important features contribute to an enhanced quality of life for city residents and make New Bedford a great place for visitors to explore and experience. Designation as state Cultural District will serve to highlight these important attributes and I am appreciative of the support of Senator Mark Montigny and his staff have provided during the application process,” said Mayor Jon Mitchell.

The Massachusetts Legislature created the process to obtain the Cultural District designation in 2010 and 17 such districts have been approved across the Commonwealth including in the communities of Pittsfield, Lowell, Hyannis, Gloucester and Boston. In addition, there are 182 recognized cultural districts in the United States of America.

The Massachusetts Cultural Council oversees the designation process and emphasizes its goal of increasing economic activity through what is often referred to as the “Creative Economy.” Many cities and towns have seen significant economic impacts derived from activity in arts and culture. In an effort to track economic activity, New Bedford’s Steering Committee will collect specific data such as tourist numbers, new cultural activities, survey results and business sales.

New Bedford has grown over the years in the number of venues, events and organizations devoted to art, culture and history. Cultural programming and institutions such as AHA!, the Zeiterion, and a rich collection of galleries, museums, and historic sites all contribute to the City’s vibrancy. Recently, The Atlantic magazine named New Bedford the “7th most artistic city in the country.” Downtown New Bedford is also home of one of the nation’s urban National Parks.

Other cities in the Commonwealth with cultural districts have received assistance from a number of state agencies for improvements in their district. The designation is expected to

help New Bedford advance toward its goals of increased tourism and business development.