

Offered by Councilors Kenzie Bok and Liz Breadon



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

IN THE YEAR TWO THOUSAND TWENTY ONE

HOME RULE PETITION

WHEREAS: In the lead-up to the 1976 Bicentennial fifty years ago, Boston led the way as one of the first cities to begin landmarking buildings for the purpose of historical preservation, with the Boston Landmarks Commission created by state legislation in 1975 largely in response to widespread demolitions of historical buildings; *and*

WHEREAS: Since then, there has been no update to the Landmark Commission's enabling legislation to allow for preservation of a more diverse set of buildings, despite recognition by the historic preservation community of a greater regard for local community history; *and*

WHEREAS: Due to state law, only individual buildings with significance above the local level may be landmarked, which makes it very difficult to protect many buildings important to the history of Boston's historically Black or immigrant neighborhoods, leaving only the usually futile option of demolition delay for communities seeking to preserve the structures that are important to them; *and*

WHEREAS: Cities such as San Francisco allow for the designation of City Landmarks relevant to local history, which has allowed the city to preserve structures such as the Third Baptist Church Complex, which was the first Black Baptist congregation formed west of the Rocky Mountains and which played an important role for Black community leaders, but would likely not qualify as nationally-relevant; *and*

WHEREAS: A minor change in the definition of landmarks in the Boston Landmark Commission's enabling legislation would give the Commission a greater ability to designate sites particularly important to Boston's history as landmarks and to more fully preserve and honor a history that includes all Bostonians, not only white, affluent, and well-known historical figures; *NOW THEREFORE BE IT*

ORDERED: That a petition to the General Court, accompanied by a bill for a special law relating to the City of Boston to be filed with an attested copy of this Order be, and hereby is, approved under Clause One (1) of Section Eight (8) of Article Two (2), as amended, of the Amendments to the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, to the end that legislation be adopted precisely as follows, except for clerical or editorial changes of form only.

PETITION FOR A SPECIAL LAW RE: THE BOSTON LANDMARKS COMMISSION

SECTION 1. Section 2 of chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975, as most recently amended by Section 11 of Chapter 373 of the Acts of 2018, is hereby amended by striking the following language:

“‘Landmark’, any physical feature or improvement designated by the commission in accordance with section four as a physical feature or improvement which in whole or part has historical, social, cultural, architectural or aesthetic significance to the city and the commonwealth, the New England region or the nation.”

And replacing it with the following:

“‘Landmark’, any physical feature or improvement designated by the commission in accordance with section four as a physical feature or improvement which in whole or part has historical, social, cultural, architectural or aesthetic significance to the city, the commonwealth, the New England region or the nation.”

SECTION 2. Notwithstanding any other law, rule, regulation, or provision to the contrary, these sections shall apply to the Boston Landmarks Commission only.

SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

Filed on: January 29, 2021