
HOUSE BILL 2583

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By Representatives McBride, Haler, Zeiger, Stambaugh, Moscoso, Bergquist, Fitzgibbon, Peterson, Van De Wege, Springer, Santos, Goodman, Hickel, and Tharinger

Read first time 01/15/16. Referred to Committee on Community Development, Housing & Tribal Affairs.

1 AN ACT Relating to authorizing specified local governments to
2 designate a portion of their territory as a creative district subject
3 to certification by the Washington arts commission; adding new
4 sections to chapter 43.46 RCW; and creating a new section.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that:

7 (a) A creative district is a designated, geographical, mixed-use
8 area of a community in which a high concentration of cultural
9 facilities, creative businesses, or arts-related businesses serve as
10 the anchor of attraction.

11 (b) In certain cases, multiple vacant properties in close
12 proximity may exist within a community that would be suitable for
13 redevelopment as a creative district.

14 (c) Creative districts are a highly adaptable economic
15 development tool that is able to take a community's unique
16 conditions, assets, needs, and opportunities into account and thereby
17 address the needs of large, small, rural, and urban areas.

18 (d) Creative districts may be home to both nonprofit and for-
19 profit creative industries and organizations.

20 (e) The arts and culture transcend boundaries of race, age,
21 gender, language, and social status.

1 (f) Creative districts promote and improve communities in
2 particular and the state more generally in many ways. Specifically,
3 such districts:

4 (i) Attract artists and creative entrepreneurs to a community and
5 thereby infuse the community with energy and innovation and enhance
6 the economic and civic capital of the community;

7 (ii) Create a hub of economic activity that helps an area become
8 an appealing place to live, visit, and conduct business, complements
9 adjacent businesses, creates new economic opportunities and jobs in
10 both the cultural sector and other local industries, and attracts new
11 businesses and assists in the recruitment of employees;

12 (iii) Establish marketable tourism assets that highlight the
13 distinct identity of communities, attract in-state, out-of-state, and
14 international visitors, and become especially attractive destinations
15 for cultural, recreational, and business travelers;

16 (iv) Revitalize and beautify neighborhoods, cities, and larger
17 regions, reverse urban decay, promote the preservation of historic
18 buildings, and facilitate a healthy mixture of business and
19 residential activity that contributes to reduced vacancy rates and
20 enhanced property values;

21 (v) Provide a focal point for celebrating and strengthening a
22 community's unique cultural identity, providing communities with
23 opportunities to highlight existing cultural amenities as well as
24 mechanisms to recruit and establish new artists, creative industries,
25 and organizations; and

26 (vi) Enhance property values. Successful creative districts
27 combine improvements to public spaces such as parks, waterfronts, and
28 pedestrian corridors, alongside property development. The
29 redevelopment of abandoned properties and historic sites and
30 recruiting businesses to occupy vacant spaces can also contribute to
31 reduced vacancy rates and enhanced property values.

32 (2) It is the intent of the legislature that the state provide
33 leadership and a helping hand to local communities desirous of
34 creating their own creative districts by, among other things,
35 certifying districts, offering available incentives to encourage
36 business development, exploring new incentives that are directly
37 related to creative enterprises, facilitating local access to state
38 assistance, enhancing the visibility of creative districts, providing
39 technical assistance and planning help, ensuring broad and equitable
40 program benefits, and fostering a supportive climate for the arts and

1 culture, thereby contributing to the development of healthy
2 communities across the state and improving the quality of life of the
3 state's residents.

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** The definitions in this section apply
5 throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires
6 otherwise.

7 (1) "Commission" means the Washington state arts commission.

8 (2) "Coordinator" means the employee of the Washington state arts
9 commission who is responsible for performing the specific tasks under
10 section 5 of this act.

11 (3) "Creative district" means a land area designated by a local
12 government in accordance with section 3 of this act that contains
13 either a hub of cultural facilities, creative industries, or arts-
14 related businesses, or multiple vacant properties in close proximity
15 that would be suitable for redevelopment as a creative district.

16 (4) "Local government" means a city, county, or town.

17 (5) "State-certified creative district" means a creative district
18 whose application for certification has been approved by the
19 commission.

20 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) A local government may designate a
21 creative district within its territorial boundaries subject to
22 certification as a state-certified creative district by the
23 commission. Two or more local governments may jointly apply for
24 certification of a creative district that extends across a common
25 boundary.

26 (2) In order to receive certification as a state-certified
27 creative district, a creative district must:

28 (a) Be a geographically contiguous area;

29 (b) Be distinguished by physical, artistic, or cultural resources
30 that play a vital role in the quality and life of a community,
31 including its economic and cultural development;

32 (c) Be the site of a concentration of artistic or cultural
33 activity, a major arts or cultural institution or facility, arts and
34 entertainment businesses, an area with arts and cultural activities,
35 or artistic or cultural production;

36 (d) Be engaged in the promotional, preservation, and educational
37 aspects of the arts and culture of the community and contribute to

1 the public through interpretive, educational, or recreational uses;
2 and

3 (e) Satisfy any additional criteria required by the commission
4 that in its discretion will further the purposes of sections 2
5 through 5 of this act. Any additional eligibility criteria must be
6 posted by the commission on its public web site.

7 (3) The commission may grant certification to a creative district
8 that does not qualify for certification under subsection (2) of this
9 section if the land area proposed for certification contains multiple
10 vacant properties in close proximity that would be suitable, as
11 determined by the commission, for redevelopment as a creative
12 district.

13 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** (1) The commission must create a process
14 for review of applications submitted by local governments for
15 certification of state-certified creative districts. The application
16 must be submitted on a standard form developed and approved by the
17 commission.

18 (2) After reviewing an application for certification, the
19 commission must approve or reject the application or return it to the
20 applicant with a request for changes or additional information. The
21 commission may request that an applicant provide relevant information
22 supporting an application. Rejected applicants may reapply at any
23 time in coordination with program guidelines.

24 (3) Certification must be based upon the criteria specified in
25 section 3 of this act.

26 (4) If the commission approves an application for certification,
27 it must notify the applicant in writing and must specify the terms
28 and conditions of the commission's approval, including the terms and
29 conditions set forth in the application and as modified by written
30 agreement between the applicant and the commission.

31 (5) Upon approval by the commission of an application for
32 certification, a creative district becomes a state-certified creative
33 district with all of the attendant benefits under sections 2 through
34 5 of this act.

35 (6) The commission may revoke a certification previously granted
36 for failure by a local government to comply with the requirements of
37 this section or an agreement executed pursuant to this section.

38 (7) In addition to any powers explicitly granted to the
39 commission under sections 2 through 5 of this act, the commission is

1 granted such additional powers as are necessary to carry out the
2 purposes of sections 2 through 5 of this act. Where authorized by
3 law, such powers may include offering incentives to state-certified
4 creative districts to encourage business development, exploring new
5 incentives that are directly related to creative enterprises,
6 facilitating local access to state economic development assistance,
7 enhancing the visibility of state-certified creative districts,
8 providing state-certified creative districts with technical
9 assistance and planning aid, ensuring broad and equitable program
10 benefits, and fostering a supportive climate for the arts and culture
11 within the state.

12 (8) The creation of a district under this section may not be used
13 to prohibit any particular business or the development of residential
14 real property within the boundaries of the district or to impose a
15 burden on the operation or use of any particular business or parcel
16 of residential real property located within the boundaries of the
17 district.

18 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** The coordinator must:

19 (1) Review applications for certification and make a
20 recommendation to the commission for action;

21 (2) Administer and promote the application process for the
22 certification of creative districts;

23 (3) With the approval of the commission, develop standards and
24 policies for the certification of state-certified creative districts.
25 Any approved standards and policies must be posted on the
26 commission's public web site;

27 (4) Require periodic written reports from any state-certified
28 creative district for the purpose of reviewing the activities of the
29 district, including the compliance of the district with the policies
30 and standards developed under this section and with the conditions of
31 an approved application for certification;

32 (5) Identify available public and private resources, including
33 any applicable economic development incentives and other tools, that
34 support and enhance the development and maintenance of creative
35 districts and, with the assistance of the commission, ensure that
36 such programs and services are accessible to creative districts; and

37 (6) With the approval of the commission, develop such additional
38 procedures as may be necessary to administer this section. Any

1 approved procedures must be posted on the commission's public web
2 site.

3 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** Sections 2 through 5 of this act are each
4 added to chapter 43.46 RCW.

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