

HISTORIC SOUTH LA

Black Cultural District



LA COMMONS TAPPED TO LEAD ARTS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EFFORT TO MOVE FORWARD CALIFORNIA'S FIRST EVER BLACK CULTURAL DISTRICT

In partnership with Senator Lola Smallwood-Cuevas, LA Commons is proud to provide community awareness and planning efforts to ensure cultural preservation, economic development and arts-centered investment for the new Historic South LA Black Cultural District

SOUTH LOS ANGELES, CA – December 19, 2025 – On Friday, December 12, 2025, the California Arts Council (CAC) voted unanimously to officially designate Historic South LA – a community that arts nonprofit, LA Commons, both serves and calls home – as California's first ever Black Cultural District. The Historic South LA Black Cultural District joins nine other state-designated districts added to the CAC's Cultural Districts program, for a total of 24 state cultural districts. A cultural district is a well-defined geographic area with a high concentration of cultural resources, and South LA boasts the highest concentration of Black residents, businesses and cultural landmarks in the state of California.

As a key partner, [LA Commons](#) is proud to work with Senator Lola Smallwood-Cuevas to lead an arts-centered approach to the community awareness, engagement and planning efforts that will bring the newly designated Black Cultural District to life. In 2023, Senator Smallwood-Cuevas secured \$3 million in

state funding to construct monuments and markers to recognize the important story of Black Los Angeles. In 2025, the Senator secured an additional \$2.5 million in state funding to support continued planning, community engagement and the development of the Black Cultural District's physical and cultural infrastructure.

"It is deeply rewarding to witness our work preserving community stories over the past 25 years contribute to the recognition of a Black Cultural District," says Karen Mack, Founder and Executive Director of LA Commons. "As the realization of an effective District unfolds, we are committed to ensuring that it benefits the community through youth leadership, artist engagement, public art, and programming that brings people together. This project builds on our collaborations with Senator Smallwood-Cuevas, even before she was a senator, advocating for equity in South LA, with the community-engaged process for developing the monuments and markers upcoming in January serving as an extension of these efforts."

California is home to the country's leading creative economy, and as part of the CAC's new cohort of cultural districts, the first ever Black Cultural District in California further represents the cultural legacy of the state's most valuable resource – its diversity – driving cultural, economic, and social vitality.

The Black Cultural District designation follows years of advocacy, community engagement and state action in partnership between LA Commons and Senator Smallwood-Cuevas. LA Commons was tapped as a primary collaborator to ensure that local residents and stakeholders play a meaningful role in shaping the District's creative vision with community-led planning, youth programming, local artist engagement, vibrant cultural events, and building the monuments and markers to center the voices, creativity and resilience of South LA. For example, LA Commons convened a series of Story Summits, where South LA residents and stakeholders shared their visions for the future of the Black Cultural District. More information and findings from these Story Summits [can be read here](#).

"This District positions South LA as a destination," said Senator Smallwood-Cuevas. "We know millions come to California, and we don't want them getting on the 10 freeway and driving from the beach to downtown over to Orange County. We want them to stop to partake, to spend some money, and to get a little bit of that Black South LA cultural resilience that we know our country needs."

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About LA Commons

Everyone has a story to tell. [LA Commons](#), a 501(c)(3) arts nonprofit organization, is on a mission to engage communities in artistic and cultural expression that tells their unique stories and serves as a basis for dialogue, interaction and a shared understanding of Los Angeles. Through community-based art programs, centered on youth leadership development, we help diverse, generally low-income neighborhoods create dynamic works of public art that build community connection and empowerment.