

AMERICA  
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VIRGINIA

VA250

RICHMOND'S VIRGINIA250:

# A Call to Co-Create Our Commemorative Year





## An Invitation to Storytellers, Cultural Leaders, and Community Shepherds



Richmond stands at a unique intersection of history and possibility. As we enter Virginia250—the commemoration of our Commonwealth’s 250th anniversary—this moment calls us to do what Richmond has committed to do: **tell the truth about our own history and use that truth-telling as a foundation for building a more inclusive, equitable future.**

This resource guide is your invitation to participate in Richmond’s Virginia250 commemoration as an extension of our city’s “A City that Tells Its Stories” pillar—a commitment to make Richmond a national model for honest reckoning with slavery, racism, and the ongoing struggles for Black empowerment that have defined our city since its founding.



### Why This Matters: History as Foundation

Mayor Danny Avula’s Mayoral Action Plan (MAP) recognizes what many of us already know: the issues and inequalities we face today stem directly from our history. Richmond has witnessed both unthinkable inhumanity and courageous, visionary resistance to racism and oppression. Our city continues to navigate the challenge of meeting high aspirations for shared prosperity, social justice, and racial inclusion—often in contexts of limited resources and unfavorable policy environments.

**Virginia250 offers us a unique platform to advance this work on a national and global stage.** A thriving Richmond must acknowledge this complex history and make space for creative dialogue and expression of the many stories—told and untold—that have shaped and continue to shape our city. By telling and listening to stories, we share our humanity and make the sharing of power through democratic means possible.



## This Is Not a Spectator Opportunity



Virginia250 is not about passive observation or sanitized nostalgia. This is an invitation to co-create Richmond's commemorative year in ways that align with our City's goals. Through Virginia250, Richmond seeks to make clear—to residents and to national and global audiences—that the City of Richmond stands for **inclusive multiracial democracy based on the sharing of power and shared commitments to building a better city.**

This is a sacred opportunity to:

- Honestly tell the stories of our past, present, and future
- Use commemoration as a vehicle for repair and relationship-building
- Model what it means to reckon with difficult history while imagining new possibilities
- Center voices and narratives that have been systematically excluded
- Build a more perfect union to pass along to the next generation



## Your Role in This Work

We seek Richmond's storytellers, historians, cultural leaders, nonprofits, and community shepherds to join this conversation. Your participation is essential. Whether you work in:

- Arts and culture organizations
- Historical preservation and interpretation
- Community organizing and advocacy
- Education and youth development
- Faith communities and civic groups
- Archives, museums, and cultural institutions

### **You have a role in shaping how Richmond commemorates Virginia250.**

This resource guide provides pathways for participation and collaborative frameworks. It's designed to help you understand how your work can contribute to Richmond's broader storytelling goals while accessing support and resources to make that work possible. As we move throughout this commemorative year, we invite you to continue the conversation. We seek to build a thriving city and to honestly tell the stories of our past, present, and future.

Please share this information and invite others to participate as well. This is a call to action—an invitation to help answer the sacred questions facing our community through the powerful act of storytelling.



## Your Role in This Work (cont.)



**Richmond's history is complex, painful, and filled with resistance and vision. Our commemorative year should be too.**

Let's build it together.

Virginia250 participation is identified in Richmond's [Mayoral Action Plan](#) as a key strategy under the "A City that Tells Its Stories" pillar. This guide supports nonprofits, artists, cultural leaders, and community stakeholders in contributing to Richmond's goals of honest historical reckoning, creative expression, and inclusive democratic power-sharing.



## Connect Existing Programming to Virginia250 Themes

### Reframe current initiatives

- Identify existing worship services, cultural programs, or community gatherings that align with Virginia250 themes
- Add commemorative elements to regular programming (special readings, artistic installations, discussion periods)
- Highlight connections between your ongoing work and the questions of democracy, healing, and reconciliation
- Create a sermon or program series
- Develop worship services or cultural programs that explore democracy as sacred trust
- Address themes of truth-telling, reconciliation, and building beloved community
- Connect historical narratives to present-day challenges and opportunities

## Partner with Other Organizations

### Build interfaith and cross-cultural collaborations

- Partner with congregations or cultural institutions from different traditions
- Co-host events that bring diverse perspectives to Virginia's complex history
- Create collaborative art installations, performances, or exhibitions
- Reach out to smaller organizations to participate in established events
- Amplify the organizations and events that represent other perspectives, but don't have the same resources

### Connect with schools and universities

- Partner with educational institutions for intergenerational dialogue
- Host student performances, exhibitions, or research presentations
- Provide spaces for youth-led commemorative programs

### Engage neighborhood organizations

- Collaborate with community centers, civic associations, and grassroots groups
- Bring Virginia250 conversations into neighborhoods across Richmond
- Ensure diverse geographic and demographic participation



## Host Facilitated Conversations

### Organize dialogue sessions

- Host facilitated conversations addressing: “What should be true in Richmond by the end of 2026?”
- Create safe spaces for truth-telling about Richmond’s history
- Facilitate discussions on democratic renewal and community healing
- Looking for questions to prompt discussion? Please see the Sample Questions at the end of this document.

### Offer your space

- Make your sanctuary, gallery, or community space available for Virginia250 programming
- Host roundtables, panel discussions, or community forums
- Create contemplative spaces for reflection on democracy and justice

### Train facilitators

- Develop capacity within your organization to lead meaningful dialogue
- Equip leaders with skills for navigating difficult conversations
- Share facilitation resources across participating organizations

## Create Original Programming

### Commission or present new works

- Commission artists, musicians, or writers to create work exploring Virginia’s contradictions and promise
- Present exhibitions, performances, or installations that honor untold stories
- Highlight voices historically excluded from founding narratives

### Document community stories

- Collect oral histories from congregation members or community participants
- Create archives of local experiences of democracy, struggle, and hope
- Share these stories through exhibits, publications, or digital platforms



## Develop educational resources

- Create study guides, discussion materials, or educational toolkits
- Offer workshops on Richmond's history and its meaning for today
- Make resources available to other organizations

## Engage Your Community

### Mobilize your members

- Encourage congregation members or stakeholders to attend Virginia250 events across the city
- Create opportunities for people to serve as volunteers, storytellers, or program participants
- Build awareness through newsletters, bulletins, and announcements

### Form working groups

- Establish committees focused on Virginia250 participation
- Engage members with specific skills (historians, educators, artists, organizers)
- Create accountability for meaningful participation throughout the commemorative year

## Model Reconciliation and Democratic Practice

### Practice what you preach

- Demonstrate inclusive decision-making within your organization
- Model truth-telling about your institution's own history
- Take concrete actions toward repair and reconciliation

### Engage in civic participation

- Encourage voter registration and civic education
- Connect spiritual or cultural values to democratic participation
- Remind communities that democracy requires active engagement



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## Stay Connected and Share Learning

### Participate in ongoing convenings

- Attend follow-up gatherings with other faith leaders and cultural institutions
- Share what you're learning through your Virginia250 engagement
- Collaborate on evaluating impact and adjusting approaches

### Report back and celebrate

- Share outcomes from your programming with the broader network
- Celebrate successes and learn from challenges together
- Contribute to collective understanding of what works in commemorative healing

## Share Your Events and Programs

### Submit events to the Virginia250 calendar

- Add your organization's commemorative events, services, exhibitions, or performances to the official Virginia250 calendar. Visit the [Virginia250 Open Event Submission page](#) to submit your event details.
- Include events that explore themes of democracy, freedom, reconciliation, and community building

### Amplify through City channels

- Send organization and event information to the City of Richmond at [sarah.carpenter@rva.gov](mailto:sarah.carpenter@rva.gov) so that the City can amplify your efforts.
- Provide high-quality images, compelling descriptions, and clear event details to maximize reach



# Opportunities to Shape Richmond's Virginia250



**Key Contact for Event Submission and Social Media Amplification:** Sarah Carpenter, [sarah.carpenter@rva.gov](mailto:sarah.carpenter@rva.gov).

## VA250 Resources:

- <https://va250.org/>
- <https://va250.org/resources/>





## Sample Questions:

How can we, as an organization, individual, community, use this moment to build a more perfect union in Richmond?

What is our responsibility to pass the baton of democracy better than we found it to the next generation?

What can we, as an organization, individual, community, do to become a catalyst for the healing and unity our city and our country needs?

The story of democracy's founding is incomplete without acknowledging its contradictions and shortcomings. But it is also incomplete without acknowledging the ongoing work of those who have labored—and continue to labor—to make real the promise of liberty and justice for all. How do you see this work play out today?

What would you want to be true in Richmond by the end of 2026 if these commemorative events and conversations were hopeful, effective, healing, and productive for our community?

What conversations need to happen in our city as we seek to build a more perfect union?

What passions and ideas do you carry about how Richmond can model reconciliation, truth-telling, and democratic renewal?

What role can faith communities, cultural institutions and the city play in this work?

How do we take what we learn from these conversations and make it actionable in our communities?

How can your organization, artistic practice, or community work contribute to presenting Richmond as a site of honest historical confrontation and transformative healing?

Artists and cultural workers are essential to this commemoration. The arts serve as vehicles for truth-telling and for strengthening connections across the different cultures found in our city. What stories are you positioned to tell?

From oral histories to multimedia projects, from exhibitions to performances—how can your work document and share the narratives that have been marginalized, forgotten, or never properly recorded?

Commemoration isn't only about looking backward. How can we use this moment to help residents understand civic structures, democratic participation, and pathways to power-sharing in our city?

