

INTRODUCED: October 14, 2025

AN ORDINANCE No. 2025-240

To amend City Code § 2-1351, concerning definitions related to open data and a transparency program, and to amend ch. 2, art. VII, div. 4 of the City Code by adding therein a new section 2-1361, concerning a Freedom of Information Act request library, for the purpose of establishing an online Freedom of Information Act library.

Patron – Mayor Avula

Approved as to form and legality
by the City Attorney

PUBLIC HEARING: NOV 10 2025 AT 6 P.M.

THE CITY OF RICHMOND HEREBY ORDAINS:

§ 1. That section 2-1351 of the Code of the City of Richmond (2020) be and is hereby **amended** and reordained as follows:

Sec. 2-1351. Definitions.

For the purposes of this division, the words or terms used in this division shall be interpreted as set forth in this section, except where the context clearly indicates that a different meaning is intended:

Agency means a board, commission, department, office, or like organizational unit of the City.

AYES: _____ NOES: _____ ABSTAIN: _____

ADOPTED: _____ REJECTED: _____ STRICKEN: _____

Agency head means the highest ranking appointed, elected, or designated authority for an agency.

Data means factual, geospatial, narrative, qualitative, quantitative, statistical, tabular, or textual information, and datasets that are maintained or created by or on behalf of the City.

Dataset means a named collection containing related data, including metadata, formatted or organized in a prescribed or specific manner, such as in tabular form.

Freedom of Information Act Request Library means a publicly available webpage to publish public records requests, provided documentation, and associated costs.

FOIA manager means the Chief Administrative Officer or the designee thereof.

Legal encumbrance means a restriction on the use of data deriving from intellectual property rights under Federal or State law or from a contract to which the City is a party.

Machine-readable means any widely accepted, nonproprietary, platform-independent method for formatting data that permits automated processing of such data and facilitates search capabilities.

Open data means data that is made available to the public on the internet in an open format with no fee, legal encumbrance, or registration requirement.

Open data coordinator means a City employee designated by a deputy chief administrative officer for all of the agencies that deputy chief administrative officer is assigned to coordinate, or by the Chief Administrative Officer to represent those agencies the heads of which no deputy chief administrative officer is assigned to coordinate, to perform the duties set forth in Section 2-1355(b) and elsewhere in this division.

Open data management team means the open data program manager and all open data coordinators.

Open data portal means <https://data.richmondgov.com/> or a successor website established and maintained by or on behalf of the City.

Open data program manager means the Chief Administrative Officer or the designee thereof.

Open data review officer means a City employee designated by the Chief Administrative Officer to identify and resolve questions related to the appropriateness of the publication of data.

Open dataset means a dataset, published on the open data portal, access to which is free and open to the public without a requirement for registration.

Open format means a widely accepted, machine-readable, nonproprietary, platform-independent method of formatting and transmitting data that provides automated processing, analysis, and search functions.

Protected data means data access to which an agency is required by law to deny.

Sensitive data means data access to which an agency is allowed by law to deny.

§ 2. That Chapter 2, Article VII, Division 4 of the Code of the City of Richmond (2020) be and is hereby amended by **adding therein a new section** numbered 2-1361 as follows:

Sec. 2-1361. Freedom of Information Act Request Library.

(a) All requests for public records made pursuant to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (Code of Virginia, §2.2-3700 et seq.) that meet the guidelines of a published rubric approved by the Chief Administrative Officer shall be made available to the FOIA Manager. The FOIA Manager shall ensure that all requests for public records meeting the guidelines of the approved rubric, including requests made of the City Council, Mayor, city departments, and city boards and commissions, are published on the city's website via a Freedom of Information Act Request Library.

(b) The Freedom of Information Act Request Library shall include the following for each request meeting the guidelines of the approved rubric:

- (1) The receival date for each request;
- (2) The completion date for each request, if applicable;
- (3) A copy or summary of each request;
- (4) The department or departments responsible for fulfilling each request;
- (5) Any fees or costs assigned for fulfilling each request; and
- (6) Access to any materials produced in response to each request.

§ 3. This ordinance shall be in force on July 1, 2026.

City of Richmond

Intracity Correspondence

O&R Transmittal

DATE: October 1, 2025

TO: The Honorable Members of City Council

THROUGH: The Honorable Dr. Danny Avula, Mayor

THROUGH: Odie Donald II, Chief Administrative Officer

FROM: Ross Catrow, Office of Strategic Communications

RE: Amending City Code to Establish a Freedom of Information Act Library

ORD. OR RES. No. _____

PURPOSE: To establish a public FOIA library to make documents of public interest more accessible to the public and to make the process of fulfilling FOIA requests quicker and more efficient for staff. Adoption of this ordinance will save time and money for both the public and the City.

BACKGROUND: There is a shared interest among the Mayor, members of Council, and many City residents to establish a Freedom of Information Act library, to consist of responsive records shared with FOIA requesters, on items of public interest. This ordinance tracks closely the approach successfully modeled in Newport News, Virginia. It avoids potential negative consequences that would result from a legal commitment to publish requests and produce responsive records for nearly all FOIA requests.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: Based on thousands of interactions with Richmond residents, the Mayor believes this initiative has strong public support.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES AND OTHER GOVERNMENTAL: This ordinance supports Pillar One (“A Thriving City Hall”) of the Mayoral Action Plan.

FISCAL IMPACT: None. Implementation of a FOIA Library is already part of planned FY 26 operations and has been budgeted for.

DESIRED EFFECTIVE DATE: *July 1, 2026.* The Administration has already begun work on implementation, and projects that the FOIA Library can launch on a pilot basis in very early 2026, with full adoption by all agencies by the end of the fiscal year.

REQUESTED INTRODUCTION DATE: October 14, 2025

CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING DATE: November 10, 2025

REQUESTED AGENDA: Consent Agenda

RECOMMENDED COUNCIL COMMITTEE: Governmental Operations Standing Committee

AFFECTED AGENCIES: All City agencies are affected and will participate in the FOIA Library. The Office of Strategic Communications has primary responsibility for implementation.

RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING ORD. OR RES.: This ordinance is an alternative to Ordinance 2025-210, currently under consideration by City Council. The language of this ordinance is intended to achieve the same substantive purpose as 2025-210, but in a manner that does not cause significant unintended consequences.

ATTACHMENTS: N/A

STAFF: Ross Catrow, Office of Strategic Communications