

INTRODUCED: April 13, 2026

AN ORDINANCE No. 2026-086

To designate the 1000 block of East Clay Street in honor of Bill Martin.

Patrons – Mayor Avula, Vice President Jordan and President Newbille

Approved as to form and legality
by the City Attorney

PUBLIC HEARING: APR 27 2026 AT 6 P.M.

THE CITY OF RICHMOND HEREBY ORDAINS:

§ 1. **Designation of Street Block for Honorary Name.** The 1000 block of East Clay Street shall be designated in honor of Bill Martin, pursuant to this ordinance.

§ 2. **Effect of Designation.** The designation of the street block made pursuant to this ordinance shall be honorary only, shall not replace the existing name of the street, and shall have no effect on the address of any property with an address on the designated street block. The sole effect of designation pursuant to this ordinance shall be to authorize the placement of commemorative signs in accordance with this ordinance memorializing the designation in honor of the named person.

AYES: _____ NOES: _____ ABSTAIN: _____

ADOPTED: _____ REJECTED: _____ STRICKEN: _____

§ 3. **Administration of Ordinance.** The Department of Public Works shall implement this ordinance by installing, as soon as practicable after the adoption of this ordinance, and maintaining commemorative signs in accordance with this section. The commemorative signs shall be clearly distinct from the street signs used to identify the street block in question such that a reasonable person could not conclude that the commemorative signs reflect the actual name of the street. The commemorative signs (i) shall be affixed to a sign pole installed at each end of the block designated in section 1 of this ordinance for the purpose of fulfilling the requirements of this section or to any existing sign identifying the road designated in section 1 of this ordinance located at each end of the block designated in section 1 of this ordinance and (ii) shall bear the name of the person set forth in section 1 of this ordinance.

§ 4. **Effective Date.** This ordinance shall be in force and effect upon adoption.

DATE: March 2, 2026

TO: The Honorable Members of City Council

THROUGH: The Honorable Dr. Danny Avula, Mayor

THROUGH: Al Wiggins, Jr., Deputy Chief Administrative Officer - Operations

THROUGH: Bobby Vincent, Director, Department of Public Works

FROM: The Honorable Dr. Danny Avula, Mayor

RE: Street Designation in honor of Bill Martin

ORD. OR RES. No. 2026-0056

PURPOSE: To designate the 1000 block of E. Clay Street, in honor of Bill Martin.

BACKGROUND:

William “Bill” J. Martin, long-time Director of the Valentine Museum, came to Richmond in 1994 to work at the Valentine after the institution experienced failed expansion at Valentine Riverside (now the American Civil War Museum). Martin invested his time and talents in revitalizing the Valentine and was named director just a year later in 1995. He elevated untold stories that spoke of Richmond’s history in a way that represented *all* Richmonders.

During his tenure at the Valentine Museum, Martin cultivated numerous community history series like Controversy/History and Richmond History tours. He championed the Richmond History Makers award program, facilitated renovations of the campus, fostered deeper collaboration with Richmond Regional Tourism, and advocated for downtown growth. Aside from his work at the Valentine, Martin was an advocate of the LGBTQ+ community, a lover of the Richmond arts scene, and at his core, a storyteller.

An honorary street sign will not only commemorate Martin’s contributions to Richmond but also highlights the importance of storytelling through community voices.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: Bill Martin was nominated by Brantley Tyndall at Sportsbackers and Meg Hughes, Acting Director of the Valentine Museum. In addition, Historic Richmond and VCU Health have written letters of support.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES AND OTHER GOVERNMENTAL: NA

FISCAL IMPACT: None.

DESIRED EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon adoption

REQUESTED INTRODUCTION DATE: March 23, 2026

CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING DATE: April 13, 2026

REQUESTED AGENDA: Consent

RECOMMENDED COUNCIL COMMITTEE: Land Use, Housing and Transportation

AFFECTED AGENCIES: Department of Public Works

RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING ORD. OR RES.: None

ATTACHMENTS: NA

STAFF: Lawson Wijesooriya, Chief of Staff

Nomination Form

Nomination Overview

Richmond City Council may designate city streets with honorary street signs to celebrate and memorialize individuals that were a resident of the City of Richmond, Virginia for a significant period of their life.

Nominees are considered based on their historical or cultural significance, including any significant contributions to the Richmond community.

Establishing and dedicating a Richmond City Council Honorary Street Name in a person's name is a rare, limited, and extremely high honor that may be considered and bestowed on Richmond residents. Keeping the official city street name, an Honorary Street Name includes producing, preparing, and installing a specially created sign with an honoree's name on it and installing it at the location designated for commemoration.

Nomination Process

Richmond residents, community organizations, and others interested in nominating a person to be a recipient of a Richmond City Council Honorary Street Name are welcomed to submit them for Richmond City Council consideration.

The nomination process includes completing the Richmond City Council Honorary Street Name Nomination Form and sending it to a Councilmember. It is recommended that a completed nomination, including all associated documents, **be sent directly to the Councilmember representing the Richmond Voter District containing the proposed location.**

The Councilmember may further research, consider, and vet a nomination in determining a proposal of legislation or formal Richmond City Council deliberation or action.

Guiding Legislation

Richmond City Council legislation guiding the Richmond City Council Honorary Street Name process was established by Richmond City Council Resolution # 2025-R016 and includes some of the following:

- Nominations must be for individuals, who may be alive or dead, but must have been a resident of the City of Richmond for a significant period of their life.
- Nominations are to include written documentation of the nominated individual's connection to the City of Richmond, Virginia, a description of their qualifications for receiving such an honor, and a letter from a local civic association, if applicable.
- Nominees are considered based on their historical or cultural significance, including any significant contributions to the Richmond community.
- Please see the Council resolution for more information regarding policies, etc.

Nomination Form

Please use the following Richmond City Council Honorary Street Name Nomination Form to proceed with a nomination.

A. Person Requesting Nomination (Nominator)

1. Nominator Name (Individual or Organization)
2. Nominator Contact Person (if organization)
3. Nominator/Organization Address
4. Nominator Phone Number
5. Nominator Email
6. Nominator Relationship to Nominee (if any)

B. Person Being Nominated for a Street Name (Nominee)

Full Name of Person Being Nominated (Please reconfirm correct name and spelling.)

C. Nominee: Individual Connection to City of Richmond, Virginia

The person being nominated, who may be alive or dead, must have been a resident of the City of Richmond, Virginia for a significant period of their life. Please provide the following information:

1. Was Nominee born/raised in Richmond? If so, please provide detailed date/information.
2. Please provide dates and locations of Nominee's time living in Richmond. Include details regarding birth, education (high school/university), and passing (if applicable).

D. Requested Location of Honorary Street

1. Please provide the existing official street name and block number being requested.
2. Please provide the Richmond Neighborhood name where street would be located.
3. Please provide the Richmond Voter District where street would be located.
4. Please provide reasoning for naming this particular street location.

E. Written Description of Nominee's Qualifications

Please describe in comprehensive detail (in space below and attach additional pages, as needed), including dates, names, etc., the Nominee's qualifications for receiving such an honor. Please include historical or cultural significance, including significant contributions to the City of Richmond, Virginia community.

Continued Written Description of Nominee's Qualifications

F. Letter/s from Local Civic Association/s

Please attach letter/s of support from local civic association, if applicable.

G. Additional Supporting Documents

Please attach additional documents in support of this nominee, if applicable. Such items may include, but are not limited to:

1. News articles
2. Testimony from residents
3. Testimony from family
4. Other supporting documents

H. Submitting Nomination Form

Please send completed form to a Richmond Councilmember and copy their individual Liaison. It is recommended that a completed nomination, including all associated documents, be sent directly to the Councilmember representing the Richmond Voter District containing the proposed location.

Stephen Putney House
1012 East Marshall Street
2nd Floor
Box 980549
Richmond, Virginia 23298-0066

O 804-828-4553
F 804-828-8002

Marlon F. Levy, MD, MBA
**David M. Hume Professor of Surgery, with
Tenure**
Sr. Vice President
VCU Health Sciences and Chief Executive
Officer, VCU Health System Authority

Dear Mayor Avula,

On behalf of VCU Health, I am writing to express our heartfelt support in renaming the 1000 block of E. Clay Street in honor of Bill Martin, the beloved director of the Valentine Museum who tragically passed away after being struck by a car crossing a street in downtown Richmond.

The Valentine and, by default, Bill, have been long-standing, friendly neighbors to the VCU Health community. Our team members can often be spotted eating lunch in the sun of the museum's garden or walking the halls of the exhibits during their free time. We are grateful for our strong partnership with the Valentine that helped expand upon the history and legacy of our academic health system, a mainstay in Richmond for almost 200 years.

Bill's devotion to the Valentine and to the people of Richmond was evident in his openness, his mentorship and his innovative, forward thinking. His transformative leadership as a museum director and Richmond resident were invaluable to the city, and renaming this section of Clay Street is a fitting and lasting tribute to his impact.

We hope the city he loved so deeply will honor Bill's memory in a way that reflects the warmth, generosity and spirit he shared so freely with all of us. He will be deeply missed by many.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Marlon F. Levy MD MBA".

Marlon Levy, MD, MBA
Senior Vice President for VCU Health Sciences
CEO of VCU Health



**HISTORIC
RICHMOND**

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February 10, 2026

Mayor Danny Avula
City of Richmond, Virginia
900 E. Broad St., Suite 201
Richmond, VA 23219 USA

**Honorary Street Renaming – Clay Street between 10th and 11th Street
in honor of Bill Martin**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to strongly support the renaming of Clay Street between 10th and 11th Streets in honor of William J. Martin. William J. Martin, affectionately known as Bill, served the Richmond community for many years as Director of The Valentine.

I have served as the Executive Director of Historic Richmond Foundation for more than 11 years. Historic Richmond a nonprofit whose mission is to shape the future of Richmond by preserving our diverse historic buildings, neighborhoods, and places, sparking revitalization, and championing our distinctive architectural legacy. Bill and I have been friends and colleagues for more than a decade, during which time I have worked closely with him in his capacity as Director of The Valentine.

Bill's legacy at The Valentine is reflected in many ways, including: groundbreaking community history series like Controversy/History and Richmond History Tours; the Richmond History Makers award program; major renovations of the entire museum campus; taking over responsibility for the First Freedom Center and expanded programming on religious freedom; a comprehensive collection refinement effort that prepared it for future collecting; and opening the museum as an official Richmond Region Tourism Visitor Center. Bill's leadership at The Valentine focused on collaborative cooperation and partnerships with countless local organizations and institutions.

Bill served as friend, partner and mentor to local museums and arts and cultural institutions, as well as to many business, civic and community leaders. Throughout his career in Richmond, with his wit and wisdom, energy and enthusiasm, curiosity and compassion, and his focus on sharing forgotten stories of people and place, Bill demonstrated on a daily basis his love for Richmond and passion for the revitalization of Downtown Richmond.

Building on history

His work focused on the entire community of Richmond, but the institution he led calls Clay Street home. It is on Clay Street that Bill's presence is most felt. He remade The Valentine into the tremendously important institution that it is today. Through his work at The Valentine's home on Clay Street, he helped us to understand where we came from, who we are, and where we are going. He helped to tell the stories about our past that were hard to tell and sometimes even harder to hear – as well as the stories that were fun and just a little bit irreverent. He was a huge champion of the Court End neighborhood and Downtown Richmond and understood that it was the beating heart of the region and that we, as a community, needed to invest the resources into its care and maintenance.

As a community, we will miss his visionary leadership, his reasoned and thoughtful voice, his gregarious spirit of fun and adventure, his entertaining anecdotes, his warm laugh, his sense of humor, and his willingness to roll up his sleeves and set to work to help the community better understand its history.

Through his work he demonstrated not only a commitment to excellence, but also made truly significant contributions to the City of Richmond. For all these reasons, I could not think of a better candidate for an honorary street renaming than Bill Martin and no street better for it than Clay Street between 10th and 11th Street.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions about this letter of support.

Sincerely,



Cyane Crump
Executive Director, Historic Richmond