

LEARN' DESIGN' BUILD' CHANGE

FRONTIER SESSIONS

February 3rd 2011



WHAT ARE THE FRONTIER SESSIONS?

Frontier Sessions is a pro bono brainstew of smart individuals from businesses, local governments, and nonprofits who share a common passion for the economic and cultural development of the city they inhabit. While each session's topic and location is different, the objective remains the same: generate pragmatic ideas that will have a meaningful impact on the city.

THIS SESSION'S THEME: Diversity and Inclusion in Richmond, Virginia. *How do we transform the capital of the former Confederacy into a holistic and interconnected community?*

WHAT WE DID

For the better part of an otherwise dreary Friday, we locked (willingly) a small group of socially conscious individuals into a re-purposed bank in Old Manchester. Putting all formalities aside, we encouraged and challenged each other to an open, honest conversation around what's working within our community and what needs improvement. At the end of each conversation we listed simple calls to action so that all citizens could take part in expanding our conversation.

WHAT'S ALREADY WORKING?

Starting out positive, we discussed what's worth celebrating in Richmond and what ideas, events and places we want to see more of. This list is not only a reminder of what's working, but serves to encourage further community engagement. Our hope is that by reading this you will be as inspired as we were to initiate positive change in Richmond.

ENGAGEMENT

Richmond has a growing variety of festivals and events year-round. First Fridays, the 2nd Street (or TWO st, for those in the know) Festival, Carytown Watermelon Festival, Shamrock the Block, the Folk Festival, the Irish Festival, the Greek Festival, shows at the National, and a slew of other colorful events that challenge people to learn more about their city and fellow citizens.

What can you do?

We encourage you to attend festivals you wouldn't normally go to. The idea of inclusion in its simplest form is supporting and interacting positively with other individuals within your community. Whether your vested interest is in the well-being of your neighborhood or extends to the well-being of your city, getting involved is vital as it lays the foundation for a healthy and vibrant community. So go ahead and get out more by attending the upcoming events:

53RD ANNUAL ARMENIAN FOOD FESTIVAL
Authentic Armenian cuisine, wine, beer, coffee, music and dancing.
9/15—9/18/2011 · 11:30 AM / NOON ON SUNDAY
17TH Street Farmers Market, Richmond

SHOCKOE-ON-THE-HALF-SHELL
Enjoy oysters, music and beer at the historic 17th Street Farmers Market.
Saturday 9/24/2011 · 10:00 AM
17TH Street Farmers Market, Richmond

SECOND STREET FESTIVAL
The hands of time are turned back to when 2nd Street was the heart of the city.
Saturday 10/1/2011 · 10:00 AM
2ND Street in Jackson Ward, Richmond VA

CONVERSATION

A part of avoiding the exclusion of groups and respecting the perspectives of others is confronting Richmond's troubled past. Although Richmond has taken great strides towards providing its citizens with opportunities to explore its rich history, important historical sites are still neglected by citizens and organizations.

To continue moving Richmond forward, we need to make a sustained effort to recognize the heroism of men, women, soldiers and slaves alike. While the city has come a long way in the last 50 years, we encourage the healthy and respectful discussions promoted by structures and institutions around the city, such as the Richmond Slave Trail, the Virginia Historical Society, Monument Ave Historic District and the Reconciliation Statue.

What can you do?

INDIVIDUAL

- Talk about the taboo subjects—have the difficult conversations to promote a more diverse and inclusive understanding of others.
- Walk the slave trails and begin advocating for the better treatment of historical sites.
- In order to understand your history, go visit Richmond's important museums and landmarks. Bring your family and friends.

CORPORATE

- Consider sponsoring new markers for the slave trails.
- Encourage employees to visit museums and sites to learn more about their city and community.
- Sponsor local events to encourage participation and employee engagement.

EDUCATION

Richmond is full of bright and talented minds. Home to Virginia Commonwealth University, the University of Richmond, Virginia Union University and J Sergeant Reynolds, the city houses an intricate network of over 50,000 students with varying talents, backgrounds and beliefs. Unfortunately, most students look for work in other cities after graduating. To combat this, we encourage individuals, local businesses and community groups to collaborate with our student population from the first day they step foot on campus. Not only do businesses develop critical skills by partnering with universities, but by keeping talent local, businesses help foster a greater sense of community. We encourage both individuals and businesses to exchange ideas with university students so that they too feel invested in our city and community.

What can you do?

INDIVIDUAL

- Reach out and mentor young professionals within the community. This can include local high schoolers as well.
- Consider becoming a mentor in your area of expertise to new college graduates.

CORPORATE

- Search and hire talent locally.
- Become a mentor or create an internship program.
- Participate within local job fairs.
- Get involved with the *Mayor's Youth Academy*. Start helping less-privileged children gain access to higher education through the sharing of their career options. (richmondgov.com/MayorsYouthAcademy)

CULTURE

One thing that makes this city unique and inclusive is its ability to feed a wide array of cravings. Unique restaurants and cafes like Ipanema, Crossroads, Comfort, Croaker's Spot, Black Sheep, Sprout, Mamma Zu and many others, expose the palate to both local and international cuisines. Eclectic businesses like Quirk, Rumors, Mongrel, South of the James Market, and Chop Suey can please even the most eccentric shopper.

What can you do?

These calls to action are simple. If you want to see a greater range of diversity within your community, you must support the diversity that already exists.

INDIVIDUAL & CORPORATE

- Start eating in places you have never been before (Here are just a few of our favorites:)
 - ▶ Try ordering the fried green tomatoes at *Comfort*
 - ▶ Drink a beer out on the patio of *Legend Brewery*
 - ▶ Eat with your hands at *Nile Ethiopian Restaurant*
 - ▶ Have an artisanal and custom blended cocktail at *Juleps*
- Shop at a local business and not just large chains. It is only through greater demand that a great supply will occur.

TRANSPORTATION

Realizing Richmond is already incredibly diverse, it became apparent during our conversation that our city still lacks the level of inclusion we as citizens desire. Much like a high school cafeteria, we all have our favorite spots and we like sticking to them. Fair enough, but breaking these barriers would not only help to reduce social divides, it would help to promote local business. Piggy backing upon our community's positive attributes, we began to realize the important role transportation plays in helping bridge the metro area.

Having effective public transit would enable geographically distanced citizens without reliable transportation to join in the daily events and happenings throughout the city and have clearer access to job opportunities. In addition, improving and developing bike routes would further help this connection by taking people out of the confines of vehicles and out on the streets to interact and converse. We recommend that city's retailers and the local government come together and help subsidize the physical growth of these initiatives.

What can you do?

INDIVIDUAL

- Take the train from Main Street Station to promote ridership.
- Instead of driving your own car, ride *Mega Bus* from Richmond. Megabus customers can travel directly to Washington, Hampton, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Durham and Charlotte.

CORPORATE

- In addition to considering the above forms of transportation for all business related travel, ask your company to sponsor a bike rack to be put up somewhere within the city.
- Once a week sponsor a "take your bike" to work day at the office.

- If you need to take a taxi, keep it green. Take *Bio Taxi*. By taking grease obtained from local restaurants and converting it to bio-diesel, Bio Taxi provides Richmond with a fully sustainable, luxurious transportation service.

- Join the collaborative consumption trend and become a member of *Zipcar*—there are now two locations within the Richmond area. Zipcar not only helps you save on rental fees, it helps reduce the high demand for intercity parking.

QUESTIONS?

Do you want to get more involved? The next Frontier Session will be held September 2011. For more information, comments, or to participate in future Frontier Sessions, please contact Laura Bowser at LAURA@THEFRONTIERPROJECT.COM.