

Fountain Hills History & Culture Advisory Commission: Advises the Town Council on historic and cultural preservation and works to promote public awareness of the town's history.

Working Group Meeting: Friday, November 21

Participants: Bill Burns, Bonnie Kline, and Tiffany Titus

Call to Order: 3:00 PM

Meeting Close: 3:45 PM

Meeting Location: Fountain Hills Community Center

Meeting Summary:

This working group was focused on the Town's America250 Initiative. The purpose of the working group is to brainstorm and collect potential viable programs, events or initiatives that promote public awareness of the town's history and celebrate America's 250th birthday and present their top recommendations. In addition, we organized our ideas and recommendations into strategic buckets that map to Town Strategic Plan themes.

Background:

Various Commission members have participated in the America250 working group (past and current). All of the past brainstorming was considered as the current working group compiled and considered their (these) recommendations to the Town. The recommendations are being presented to staff a month prior to the next Commission meeting, Wednesday, December 3, 2025 for consideration of the full Commission and the Town. This gives ample time for additional input and feedback before the formal Commission Advisory Meeting in December.

Recommendations:

For the Town's America250 initiative, we present our top recommended actions in the table below. We also have included out barnstormed ideas for your consideration.

To help engage our community and stakeholders, we recommend creating and distributing a town proclamation / letter/memo in the very near term to FH organizations and groups saying the Town is going to celebrate the 250th Anniversary of our country's founding and inviting community to participate. If they have a patriotic/historic themed event or exhibit planned for 2026, we ask that they please let the Town know (by a deadline) and the Town will be happy to include it in the 250th Celebration brochures, calendar of events and other publicity. In addition, a specially designed logo will be available for your group to display on your promotions. (See branding recommendation below).

Fountain Hills' America250 Initiative Recommendations	Engagement Area Categorization
1 Semiquincentennial Fountain Lighting Ceremony (red, white, blue)	Tourism, Economic Development, and Main Street Activation; Commemorative Projects
2 America250 Cutout (A large 250 sign (similar to the one used for the FH 50th birthday in 2020) could be erected in Fountain Park with an invitation for people to take selfies with the sign and the Fountain - then post on social media. The sign should be Red, White and Blue and tie in with the logo developed for the Town's Branding	Tourism, Economic Development, and Main Street Activation; Commemorative Projects
3 America250 Branding. Develop a branding page - with logos, slogan, verbiage to be used in promotional materials and online media.	Civic, Government, and Community Engagement
4 America250 Re-Branded Events. Rebrand existing Town events: A) Town Proclamation Series (monthly themes January–December 2026). Re-brands the Mayor’s monthly community member awards for the Semiquincentennial celebratory year. B) Semiquincentennial (America250) Concert Series (Fountain Hills Music Fest 2026 re-branded); C) America250 Market on the Avenue (re-branded existing market for the month of America250)	Civic, Government, and Community Engagement, Creating our History Initiatives; Commemorative Projects; Signature Events & Community Celebrations; Commemorative Projects; Tourism, Economic Development, and Main Street Activation
5 Pony Express Heritage Mural (Location ideas: Post Office or along La Montana near the Town Hall - across the street from the Post Office Mail Boxes)	Civic, Government, and Community Engagement, Creating our History Initiatives; Commemorative Projects, Interpretive, Public Art, and Cultural Installations;
6 America250 Art Walk / Scavenger Hunt (QR Code Initiative re-purposed to include historical markers and art; Re-work the existing art scavenger hunt and geo-caching for America250.	Interpretive, Public Art, and Cultural Installations; Digital, Social, and Storytelling Initiatives

Attachments / Supporting Documentation:

Appendix A - BRAINSTORM: Potential America250 Initiatives for the Town of Fountain Hills

1. Signature Events & Community Celebrations

- “America250 Fountain Hills Heritage Festival” – a multi-day celebration of local, state, tribal, and U.S. history (Town Green + Avenue of the Fountains).
- Semiquincentennial Concert Series featuring music representing America’s eras and cultures. (This takes the existing Fountain Hills Music Fest, funded by the accepted and current grant from WeKoPa, and re-brands it for 2026.)
- Time Capsule Ceremony commemorating 250 years of American experience.
- America250 Parade of Cultures (community, tribal, schools, veterans, international residents). (This could replace / re-brand the Thanksgiving Day Parade 2026)
- “Stories of America” Outdoor Film Series – documentaries, tribal films, local history films.

2. Interpretive, Public Art, and Cultural Installations

- America250 Art Walk Expansion — new and existing sculptures, memorials and plaques tied to Americana, local & tribal heritage .
- Historical Markers Program (Re-worked existing art scavenger hunt and geo-caching) and install 10–25 new markers (QR Code Initiative) (Appian Way, Fountain history, early residents, tribal significance, Pony Express, President statues, Veteran’s sites, historical sites).
- Pony Express Mural - Post Office - Combines history, tradition, and American Heritage with a highly anticipated regional community event (Pony Express) with the economic development mural initiative and the arts - our Town fame.
- America250 Fountain Conservation & Interpretation (the Fountain as a symbol of innovation, community, and identity).

3. Educational Projects (Schools, Museum, Tribal Partnerships)

- K–12 “Living History” Traveling Exhibit (Town ↔ River of Time ↔ Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation schools).
- America250 Curriculum Packet for teachers, tied to AZ state standards.
- Youth Oral History Project—students interview elders, veterans, long-time residents, and tribal members.
- “Passport to Fountain Hills History” booklet for students/families to learn local historical stops.

4. Museum, Archives, and Local History Projects

- Major River of Time Museum Exhibit: “250 Years of the American Story: The Southwest and Beyond.”
- Digitization and Preservation Weekend—scan local photos, maps, and family histories.

- Veterans & Founders Oral History Archive launch. With invited speakers, in partnership with the FH Theater, e.g.: reading of the Declaration of Independence in period attire.
- “Voices of the Verde Valley” oral history mini-documentary involving tribal and local elders.

5. Civic, Government, Community Engagement, and Creating our History Initiatives

- Town Proclamation Series (monthly themes January–December 2026). Re-brands the Mayor’s monthly community member awards for the Semiquincentennial celebratory year.
- 250 Volunteer Challenge — every resident does “250 hours” collectively; Like the hiking Challenge combined with Fountain Hills Day. leadership by FHCCA & Leadership Academy with other non profits (inclusive).
- America250 Civic Innovation Roundtable — forums on innovation, entrepreneurship, competitiveness, democracy, civic responsibility, and the future of Fountain Hills. In partnership with the Civic group FHCCA, political and a-political clubs, educational institutions, think tanks, innovation focused. Drawing in possible remote workers from outside AZ. a “Think BIG” initiative)

6. Tourism, Economic Development, and Main Street Activation

- Semiquincentennial Fountain Lighting Ceremony (red, white and blue)
- Avenue of the Fountains America250 Flags & Cultural Banners.
- Heritage Trail Map updated and reprinted.
- Pony Express Heritage Mural - In partnership with the FH Economic Dev. Mural Project (and scavenger hunt, QR Code, Public Art initiatives)
- Local Business Passport featuring historical info + discounts + cultural celebrations.
- America250 Market on the Avenue with artisans, tribal vendors, and heritage crafts.

7. Commemorative Projects

- Semiquincentennial Fountain Lighting Ceremony (red, white, blue + tribal colors rotation).
- America250 Cutout (A large 250 sign (similar to the one used for the FH 50th birthday in 2020) could be erected in Fountain Park with an invitation for people to take selfies with the sign and the Fountain - then post on social media. The sign should be Red, White and Blue and tie in with the logo developed for the Town's Branding
- America250 Commemorative Book documenting FH’s 2026–27 experiences.
- Heritage Tree Planting Initiative (250 trees planted).
- Community Quilt Project or Woven Tapestry representing all stakeholder groups.
- Pony Express Heritage Mural - In partnership with the FH Economic Dev. Mural Project (and scavenger hunt, QR Code, Public Art initiatives)
- Re-Dedication of Memorials - With public proclamation from the Mayor and possible reading of the Declaration of Independence by FH Theater team

8. Digital, Social, and Storytelling Initiatives

- “Our American Stories – FH Edition” videos from diverse residents.
- Interactive America250 Website Hub with local timelines, artifacts, and oral history clips.
- Geo-mapped Historical Walking Tour app integration (QR codes at sites).
- Digital Story Circles with tribal nations, veterans, pioneers, new residents.

9. Partnerships & Regional Collaborations

- Tri-Community Semiquincentennial Coalition
Fountain Hills + Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation + Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community.
- Statewide AZ America250 Alliance Collaboration for events, grants, cross-promotion.
- Maricopa County Library District — America250 reading and literacy initiative.