

Highlights from the four Lake Anne Virtual Focus Groups held 2/9/23 – 2/10/23**Overall summary:**

- In general, conversations with participants were lively, informative, and opinionated.
- There is an obvious affection for the area and its unique sense of community and place, while also widespread acknowledgement that it is in need of a refresh and could be a much more vibrant place
- There are mixed opinions on the best way to achieve it, but most agreed that additional density is a necessity for the area to thrive. Repeated desire to see the Crescent property redeveloped into mixed-income housing that retains the current number of affordable units (in particular, it was felt that more market-rate housing is needed to grow the customer base)
- Questions of maintenance responsibility (re: common area infrastructure in particular) coupled with the fact that the private condo association is responsible for maintaining a large public amenity make progress more difficult than it should/could be
- Most agree that some sort of anchor is needed; split on a grocery store vs. cultural amenity (grocery store came up often)
- Large mix of opinions on 1) whether parking is a problem; and 2) how to solve it

- **Focus Group #1: Business owners ('J' Block, Quayside, Bank Building/E Block)**

Summary: Positive, respectful, forward-thinking group. Good discussion of particulars impacting the business community; "It doesn't matter if we all like each other, we rise and fall together"; noted that the group that showed up tends to show up and participate together, and those who were absent tend to also participate in things as a group. Also noted that the Merchant's Committee within LARCA has been dissolved by current board; there is an alternate merchant's association (LAWPA) but it is by invitation only.

One word to describe the character of Lake Anne: Fun, charming, community, oasis, unique, authentic

What's working?

Community support; hyper-local clientele; easy parking; events/farmers' market KEY to success; character of place (not cookie-cutter development), beautiful architecture and human scale

What's not working?

WAYFINDING (both signage and GPS); Infrastructure for service businesses (deliveries, trash); lack of resources (biz community too small, no centralized merchants' association), density too low to maintain asset

What would you like to see change?

Beautification; care for public art; investment in marketing/historic district signage; revisit the condo structure in relation to commercial properties (from tenant & owner perspectives); explore funding opportunities; additional event programming during winter

Focus Group #2: Institutional/Community – Washington Baptist Church, ARB

Summary: Thoughtful, visionary group. Most are long-time Reston residents. The group as a whole was able to envision Lake Anne as a cultural hub/regional destination.

One word to describe the character of Lake Anne: Struggling, empty, striking, potential

What's working?

Community events and activities; walkability; community center; Reston Museum; easy parking; iconic design; views; access to/from walking trails

What's not working?

Lack of awareness; physical deterioration; parking (more wayfinding problem than lack of parking); accessibility issues (both physical accessibility and wayfinding); lack of variety among retailers (these participants do not patronize the shops often though they walk around the lake almost daily); seasonal lulls

What would you like to see change?

Anchor store such as a grocery; ability to “check off Saturday morning errands;” more residential density; Lake Anne as a local destination (“kaleidoscope of experiences”); cultural anchor also makes sense: strong existing art community and people need a reason to go (combo of culture + convenience); more diversity in merchandising

Focus Group #3: Residential (Non-LARCA)- Waterview Cluster, Lakeside Cluster, Lake Anne House

Summary: Lake Anne is viewed as a walkable neighborhood amenity but residents must still leave the neighborhood for much of their daily/weekly needs; participants noted that living near the lake is a huge draw for moving to the area, community is full of people looking to age in place;

One word to describe the character of Lake Anne: Tired, historic, shabby, comfortable

What's working?

Always available parking; walkability; outdoor dining; farmers' market; events (Lakeside and Fellowship House agree: most of their residents attend and love the events)

What's not working?

Little to no retail/shopping; difficult to find the plaza area; main advantage of dining is location rather than quality; empty or under constr. storefronts and high turnover of commercial spaces

What would you like to see change?

More accessibility/safety features for seniors (good sidewalks, stairways, lighting); better variety of retail while retaining character; an anchor store like a grocery; more events; keep historic nature but fix it up; promote historic legacy

Focus Group #4: LARCA & Washington Plaza Cluster

Summary: Very rich discussion with strong opinions; detailed discussion of entangled/opaque governance issues

One word to describe the character of Lake Anne: Unique, intimate, community, historic, diverse

What's working?

Positive momentum generated by restaurants (Calypso, brewery) and events; farmers' market; walkability, walking trails; beautiful view; good design; LARCA beginning to raise money via events (incl. craft market)

What's not working?

"Antique" responsibilities and ownership arrangements (e.g. privately owned village center with public common areas)--strongly emphasized that this is causing all kinds of problems – maintenance responsibilities exceed capabilities; area looking tired and run down; infrastructure challenges for new restaurants also clash with historic district guidelines, lots of infrastructure build-out required for commercial uses, some design elements don't work well, i.e. stairway lighting, lack of coordination between RA, Fairfax County, and condo association re: enforcing those guidelines; loss of funding from RA; difficult to find Lake Anne; RCC not catalyzing plaza as expected (this was contested); parking constraints as uses change

What would you like to see change?

More parking!; implement aspects of the 2015 plan (disagreement on which elements in particular); include parking lot behind Washington Plaza Baptist Church and the Lake Anne office building in the new plan; remedy structural issues at LARCA in order to better manage maintenance; more market-rate housing in vicinity (Crescent); ensure infrastructure accommodates growth; develop a green space for LARCA/Washington Plaza residents; water access rights for LARCA owners; modernization of easements, access agreements, etc.