



Lake Anne Village

Reston, Virginia | William Conklin & James Rossant | Completed 1967

Robert E. Simon was a wealthy real estate developer from New York City. In 1961, he visited northern Virginia and became entranced by the beauty of the low, rolling terrain, alternating between woodland and farmland.

Simon saw the area as being suitable for a new town, but he wanted it to be different from the suburban sprawl that characterized most post-WWII development. Walkability, accessible amenities, and the idea of living and working in the same area were important to him. He came up with the following seven "founding goals" for his town:

1. Reston would have housing for all.
2. Reston would allow residents to live, work and play in the same community.
3. Reston would put the importance and dignity of each individual as the focal point of planning.
4. Reston would be beautiful and nature would be fostered.
5. Reston would accommodate leisure time.
6. Reston would have amenities from the outset including a library, golf courses, art, and more.
7. Reston would be financially successful.

The first of these seven goals, housing for all, was perhaps the most important. Simon wanted Reston to be open to everyone of all ages, incomes, and ethnicities. As such, it became the first open community – that is, open to African-Americans – in Virginia.



The master plan for all of Reston was designed by James Rossant, a student of Clarence Stein, and Walter Conklin. Influenced by the English garden city movement, European plazas, and the townhouses of the northeastern U.S., Reston's design featured many architectural and planning innovations.

The overarching organization was based on the development of seven separate village "clusters" that were separated from each other by open spaces, farms, roads, and lakes. Each of the clusters would have their own compact center that contained townhouses and apartments, as well as shops and offices.

Lake Anne Village was the first of these to be built, opening in 1964. It sits at the northern end of its eponymous lake, which is actually an artificial reservoir. The village's centerpiece is Washington Plaza, an intimate public space, framed by an iconic semi-circular building and overlooking the lake. With ground-level shops and restaurants, multiple levels, sculptures, water features, and broad stairs leading down to the water, the plaza is the social and economic hub of Lake Anne Village.

The buildings in the center are composed of finely scaled Brutalist structures in soft, brown brick and concrete; they include townhouses (some of which are perched directly at lakeside), apartments above shops, and – at the end of a long wooden quay – a 15-story point tower. Simon called the style "Gothic Modernism." Whatever its name, the Lake Anne complex presented a fresh design in the built environment of Northern Virginia, one that had long been dominated by suburban sprawl, haphazard development, and architecture mired in Colonial Revival.

Lake Anne Village is now a registered historic district.