

How Reston *Actually* Works

Associations, design review, and the documents a sale requires

Reston was planned in the early 1960s by Robert E. Simon, and it was built as a set of villages rather than a single subdivision. Sixty years later that structure still governs almost everything about buying and selling here, including two things that surprise people who have owned homes elsewhere.

You probably belong to more than one association

Most Reston property owners are members of Reston Association, which owns and maintains the community wide assets: the lakes, the paved trail network that links the villages, fifteen pools, tennis and pickleball courts, and the nature center. The annual RA assessment covers that, and the recreation pass that gets you into the pools and courts comes with membership at no extra charge.

Underneath RA there is usually a second layer. Townhome and patio home neighborhoods are organized into clusters, each with its own association handling landscaping, private streets, snow removal on those streets, and exterior architectural standards. Condominium buildings have their own associations covering building systems and shared spaces. So a single address can carry an RA assessment plus a cluster or condo fee, and the two are set by different boards on different schedules.

When people tell me their Reston dues are higher or lower than a neighbor's, this layering is almost always the reason.

Exterior changes go through review

RA administers design covenants across most of Reston through its Design Review Board. Paint colors, fences, decks, sheds, replacement windows, and siding generally require an approved application. Clusters often add their own standards on top.

This matters more at sale time than most owners expect. An unapproved deck or an exterior condition item flagged during an inspection shows up in the resale disclosure package, and a buyer reads it. If you are planning improvements ahead of a sale, the approval timeline is part of the project timeline.

What a Reston seller has to produce

Virginia law requires the seller to obtain the Reston Association resale disclosure certificate and deliver it to the buyer. If the home is also in a cluster or a condominium, those documents are ordered separately from that association. They are not the same package and they do not arrive together.

The RA certificate reports assessment information for the new owner along with any design or maintenance violations observed during an exterior inspection of the property. There is also a transfer fee at settlement, set at \$374 for 2026.

ORDER EARLY

RA resale disclosure certificate. Required by Virginia law. Includes an exterior inspection result you may not have seen.

Cluster or condo association documents. Separate order, separate association, separate timeline.

Any open Design Review Board items. An unresolved application is easier to close before a buyer reads about it.

We order these on day one of every Reston listing rather than waiting, because the buyer's review period does not start until the documents are delivered.

Five village centers were built in sequence, Lake Anne first, then Hunters Woods, Tall Oaks, South Lakes, and North Point, with Reston Town Center added later as the commercial core. Each guide in the series covers one of them.

Questions about How Reston Actually Works, or a home you are thinking of buying or selling here? We are glad to walk through it with you.

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