

DRCA Candidate Questionnaire: JULIE JAKOPIC

Thank you for your interest in a leadership role with the Del Ray Citizens Association. To help members get to know you, please answer the following questions.

1). Please describe your history with the Del Ray Citizens Association. How long have you been a member? In what ways have you been involved or supported the Del Ray Citizens Association?

I moved to Alexandria nearly 30 years ago and to Del Ray in 2003. As someone who has spent her life in the DC metro area, I am proud to be from a place with so much character and that works to be a community. It has been a privilege to be a part of that effort. Over the last twenty years, I have served our city and community in a number of roles. I served on and had the honor to lead both the Community Services Board and the Economic Opportunity Commission, as well as served as the Vice Chair for Finance and Administration of the Alexandria Democratic Committee. Currently I chair Hopkins House and Sheltered Homes of Alexandria. Across this work, I have worked with DRCA, our neighbors and others to help Alexandria remain a community of caring relationships even as it has grown and evolved.

When I was approached by Jen, Gayle and others to bring my experience to support our neighborhood, I was delighted. Del Ray is the exemplar of what I love about Alexandria. A place where neighbors know and support each other, where all kinds of people are welcome and where we choose to collaborate to celebrate and grow our community.

2). What do you see as the key issues facing the Del Ray neighborhood and the Del Ray Citizens Association?

There are and always will be important land use issues. The development of Potomac Yard metro and Oakville Triangle are large key projects that will impact the neighborhood for those of us who live here and for those who live or travel nearby. Smaller projects also can have major impact such as the redevelopment of the former Audi dealership property where some of the historically allowable uses are less consistent with the current nature of Mt. Vernon Avenue and neighborhood. It will be important to find ways to effectively work with the property owner to find ways to both use the property profitably and keep Mt. Vernon Avenue the fun, walkable, family place it has become.

But land use is not the only concern or opportunity for us. We have a great Library and rec center. We have two schools that bring families to our neighborhood that have and will continue to experience changes, GW Middle School and Mt Vernon Community School. Both are important community assets that we all benefit from and can use our support, such as the MVCS playground.

Building community spirit and engagement even when we aren't dealing with big, thorny, threatening issues is important. While we have seen tremendous change in the neighborhood over the past twenty years. It is a sought after community that people are drawn to and stay --

for quality of life, our schools, and our social opportunities. Encouraging these neighbors, especially those newer to the community, to participate is an important challenge and opportunity

3). What are you hoping to accomplish in a leadership role with the Del Ray Citizens Association? What approach do you expect to take to work towards the implementation of these plans?

DRCA is an important force for good in our community. The most important part of our neighborhood is our neighborliness. Advocating on land use and the city budget process create opportunity to build that, but it is sustained through community events like the House and Garden tour. I'd love to build more proactive and fun opportunities to get to know one another and chart a course for how we as a community see our future. I'd start by reaching out to members and other residents to see what they want. What they see as working now, what they wish worked better, what they love about Del Ray and what they'd want to see change through a survey and community discussions.

I'd also like to strengthen the use of social media to engage our community. The listserv is important and helpful. Greater use of Facebook and Instagram provide opportunities to document and to visually convey who we are.

We can also build on and celebrate our community's history and architecture. The work that DRCA has already done to document and share our history and the new Pattern Book provide a great view of how Del Ray and the Town of Potomac has evolved. Creating learning opportunities around these tools could be another way to engage our neighbors.

4). Is there anything else you would like to share?

If you have any suggestions or questions, I'd love to connect. Feel free to email me at Julie@iLeadStrategies.com .