



ZOTA-25-1

**A Text Amendment to Remove Data Centers
as a Permissible Use within the Industrial District**

Planning Commission Public Hearing
May 20, 2025

Text Amendment – ZOTA-25-1

- March 11, 2025 – Town Council initiates a Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment to remove data centers as an allowable use.
- April 22, 2025 – Planning Commission holds a Work Session on the text amendment.
- May 20, 2025 – Planning Commission holds a Public Hearing on the text amendment.

Next Steps:

- Planning Commission makes a recommendation.
- Town Council holds a Work Session.
- Town Council holds a Public Hearing.
- Town Council makes a final decision.

The Planning Commission must make a recommendation to Town Council by no later than 100 days after the first meeting.

100-day deadline –
Thursday, July 31, 2025.

Potential Planning Commission meeting dates for final recommendation:
Tuesday, July 15, 2025
Tuesday, July 22, 2025
Special Meeting

Data Center Ordinance Timeline

- July 11, 2017 – Town Council initiates a Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment to research industrial areas and the possibility of adding data centers.
- The originally initiated Text Amendment was not pursued with the Planning Commission nor Town Council.
- April 13, 2021 - Town Council initiates a Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment to allow data centers in the I District with the approval of a Special Use Permit.
- May 25, 2021 – Planning Commission holds a Work Session on the text amendment.
- June 15, 2021 – Planning Commission holds a Public Hearing on the text amendment.
- July 20, 2021 – Planning Commission holds a Public Hearing on the text amendment. Recommended approval 5-1.
- August 10, 2021 – Town Council holds a Public Hearing on the text amendment. Approves text amendment 7-0.

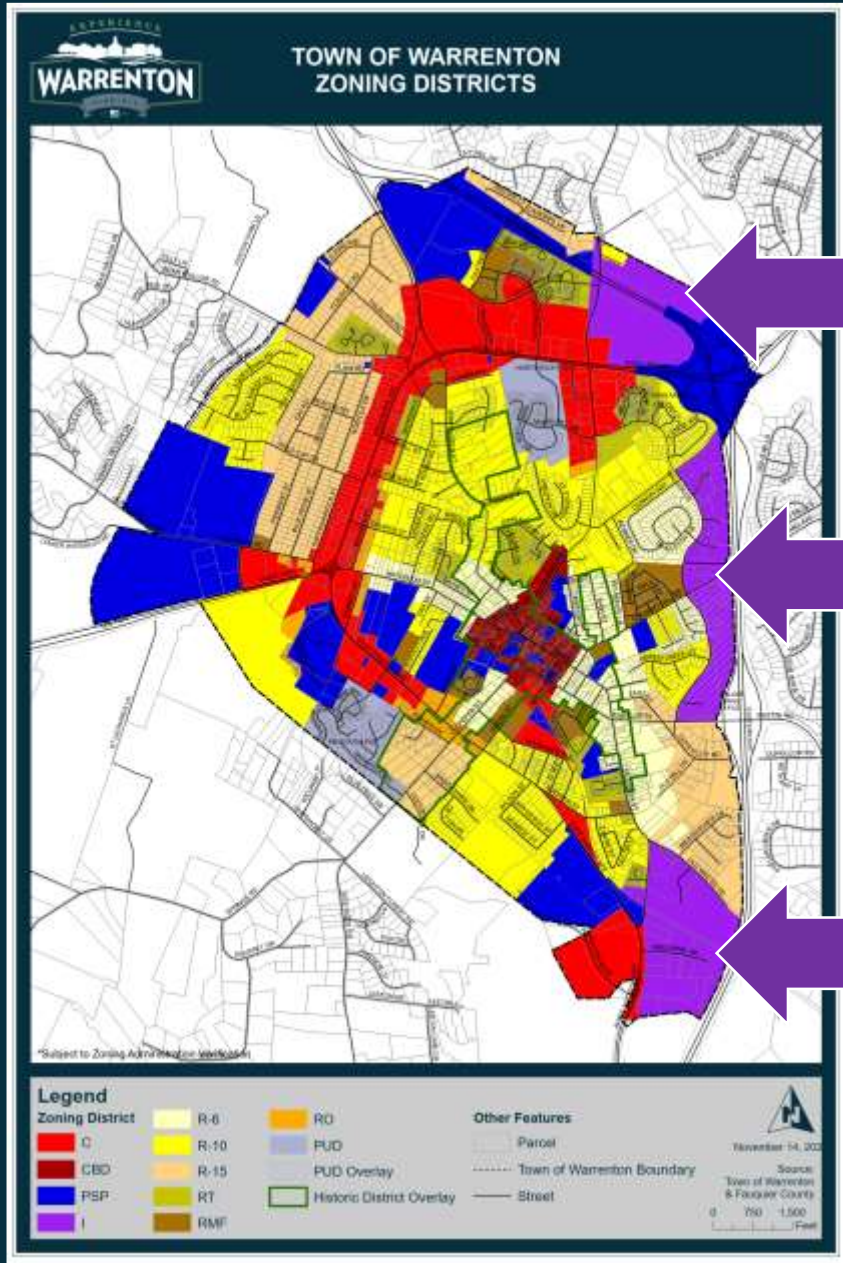
Warrenton Data Center SUP Timeline

May 6, 2022 – Special Use
Permit application accepted
for processing.

December 20, 2022 – Planning
Commission Public Hearing;
Motion to Deny.

February 14, 2023 – Town
Council Public Hearing; Motion
and Resolution to Approve

Current Zoning Ordinance Provisions for Data Centers



Industrial-Zoned Properties

Data Centers

Section 3-4.12.3: Permissible Uses in the Industrial District

By Special Use Permit upon approval of the Town Council

- added August 10, 2021

Current Zoning Ordinance Provisions for Data Centers

Zoning Ordinance Article 3 – Zoning Districts

Section 3-4.12.3: Permissible Uses in the Industrial District

By Special Use Permit upon approval of the Town Council

- Automobile body shop
- Automobile and truck repair and service
- Commercial Kennels
- Contractor's storage yard
- **Data Center – added August 10, 2021**
- Farm equipment, motorcycle, boat and sport trailer sales and service
- Fuel, coal, oil distribution storage yards
- Lumber and building supply with undercover storage
- Maintenance and equipment shops with screened outside storage
- Outdoor storage of any kind
- Plumbing and electrical supply with undercover storage
- Restaurant or cafeteria, drive-thru or otherwise
- Self-service mini-warehouse
- Temporary fair and show grounds
- Tire and battery sales and service, tire recapping and retreading
- Transmission and receiving towers of height greater than one hundred twenty-five (125) feet.
- Treatment plants, water storage tanks, major transmission lines or pipelines, pumping or regulator stations, communications towers, storage yards and substations, and cable television facilities and accessory buildings

Zoning Ordinance Article 12

Data Center: A facility containing one or more large-scale computer systems used for data storage and processing for off-site users. Typical supporting equipment includes back-up batteries and power generators, electric substations, cooling units, fire suppression systems, and enhanced security features.

- Added August 10, 2021

Current Zoning Ordinance Provisions for Data Centers

Zoning Ordinance Article 9 – Supplemental Use Regulations

9-26 Data Centers

Data Centers, as defined in Article 12, are permissible in the Industrial (I) District, subject to the following requirements.

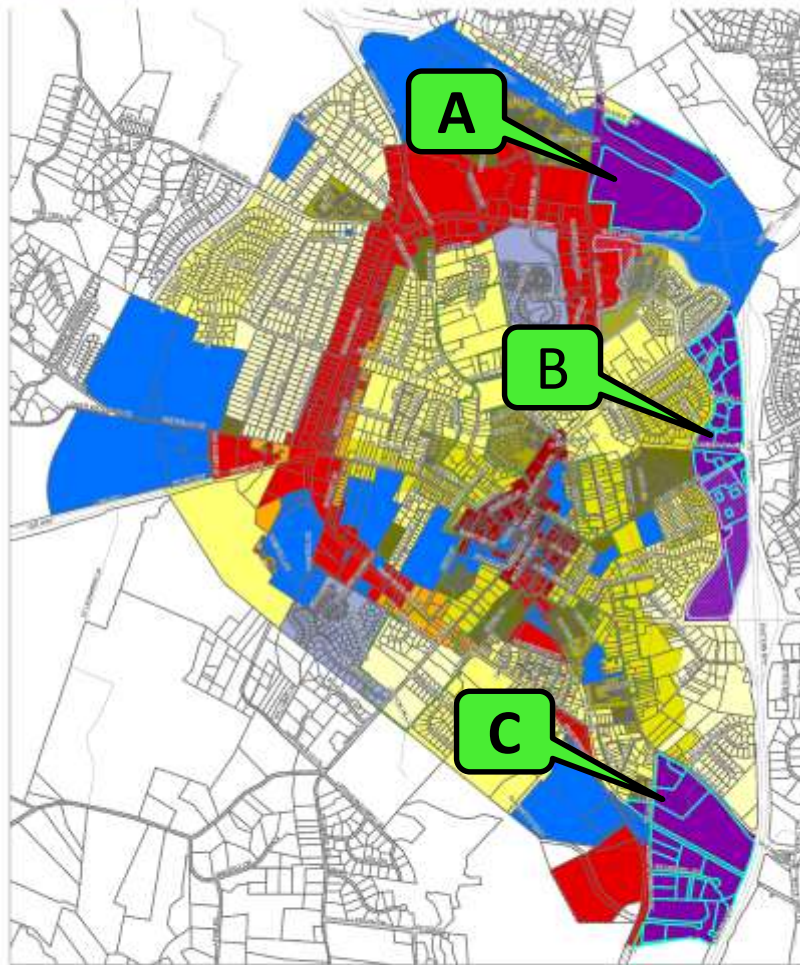
9-26.1 Additional Standards

- A. **Minimum Lot Size:** 25 acres. Town Council may approve a data center on parcels less than 25 acres as part of the special use permit application.
- B. **Cooling:** The data center shall utilize recycled water or air chillers, in conjunction with using recycled water, for cooling purposes. Potable water shall not be used for cooling.
- C. **Electric Service:** All electric service lines from the substation to the data center shall be placed underground.
- D. **Setbacks:** Per Section 3-4.12.4 (“All principal manufacturing and processing uses in industrial parks”). Town Council may approve building heights greater than 35 feet during the review of the Special Use Permit. Buildings must be setback one (1) additional foot (horizontally) from the required setback line for each additional one (1) foot (vertically) greater than 35 feet. Building heights shall be in conformance with the Comprehensive Plan. 2. The data center building shall be setback a minimum of one-hundred (100) feet from property lines.
- E. **Parking:** In accordance with “Assembly or Manufacturing Uses” per Section 7-7 of the Zoning Ordinance.
- F. **Building Facades:** 1. Building facades shall include at least two of the following design elements: a. Change in building height; b. Building step-backs or recesses; c. Fenestration (25% minimum); d. Change in building material, pattern, texture, or color; e. Use of accent materials.
- G. **Mechanical Equipment:** 1. Mechanical equipment shall be completely screened through the use of walls, fences or evergreen vegetation so that no part of the mechanical equipment can be seen from adjoining properties or right-of-ways. 2. All generators shall be equipped with mufflers to reduce emissions and noise.
- H. **Security:** 1. The facility shall provide access to Town and County emergency services staff at all times.
- I. **Landscaping:** 1. In addition to the landscape planting requirements of Article 8 of the Zoning Ordinance, any portion of the data center (including equipment) visible from a park or adjoining/across the street from a residential district shall be screened by vegetation consisting of a double staggered row of evergreen trees planted 15 feet on center. A minimum 3 foot berm planted with a double staggered row of evergreen shrubs planted 10 feet on center may be used in place of the double staggered row of evergreen trees required above.
- J. **Substations:** 1. Substations associated with the data center shall be screened from adjacent properties and right-of-ways through the use of opaque fencing in addition to evergreen trees and shrubs.

- Added August 10, 2021



TOWN OF WARRENTON Zoning District Industrial Parcels



Industrial Zoned Parcels Location & Development Status



Industrial District - Total Tax Parcel Land
76 Parcels
290 Acres of Tax Parcel Land

58 Developed Parcels

18 Undeveloped Parcels

- Includes Amazon & Walker Drive Rezoning – Areas A & B
- Includes likely candidates for Redevelopment – Area C

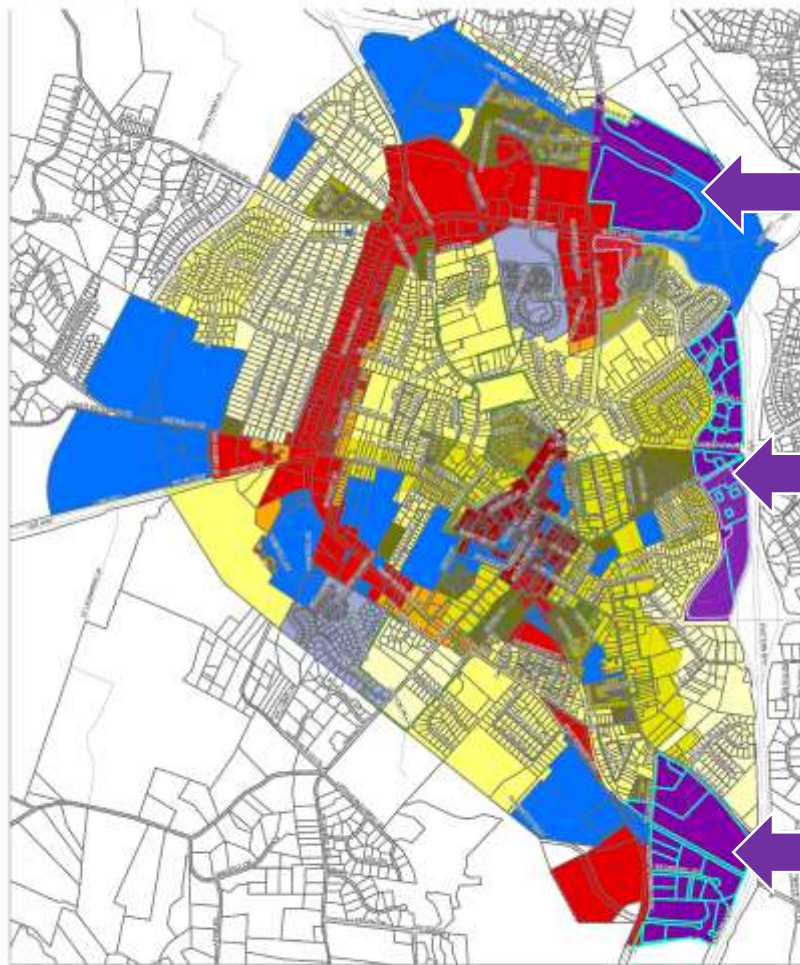
139 Acres Developed Land

151 Acres Undeveloped Land

- 52% of All Industrial Zoned Land is currently vacant
- Majority in Area C (*land with no legislative approvals*)



TOWN OF WARRENTON Zoning District Industrial Parcels

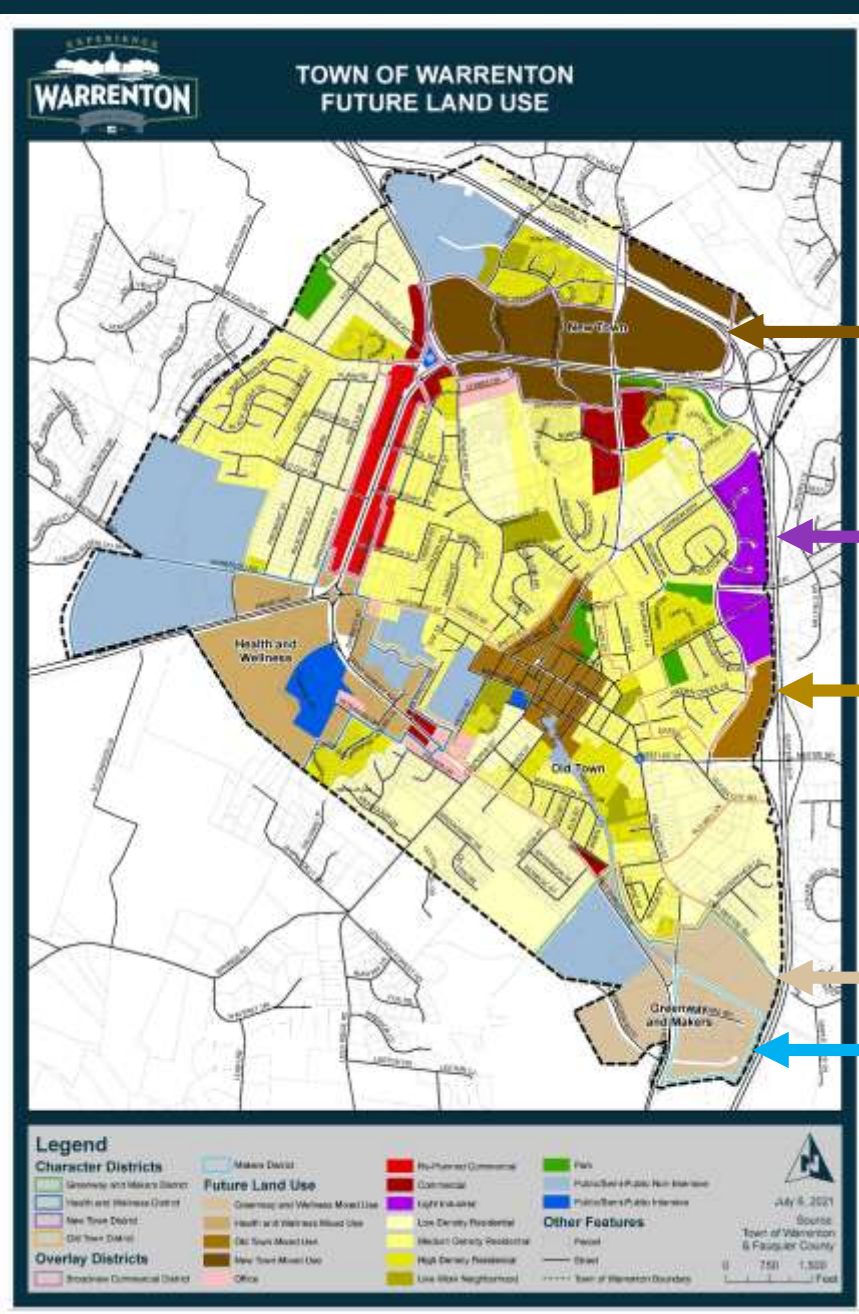


Current Zoning Map

Zoning Ordinance Article 3 – *Zoning Districts and Map*
Section 3-4 – *Requirements for Base Zoning Districts*

3-4.12.1 Legislative Intent

It is the intent of this district to implement the Town's Comprehensive Plan by providing for a variety of **light manufacturing, fabricating, processing, wholesale distributing, warehousing, and limited assembly uses** appropriately located for access by highways and providing a controlled environment within which signing is limited, uses are to be conducted generally within completely enclosed buildings, and a moderate amount of landscaping is required. In order to preserve the land for industry, to reduce extraneous traffic, and avoid future conflicts between industry and other uses, business and service uses are limited primarily to those which will be useful to employees in the district and future residential uses are restricted.



Future Land Use Map

Comprehensive Plan – Plan Warrenton 2040

Current Zoning Map – Industrial District

Future Land Use Map:

- New Town Character District/New Town Mixed Use
- Light Industrial
- Old Town Character District/Old Town Mixed Use
- Greenway & Makers Character District/Greenway and Wellness Mixed Use
- Makers Character District

Comprehensive Plan Considerations



Area A

New Town Mixed Use/New Town District

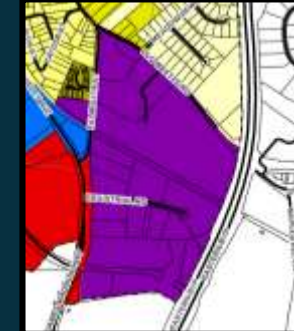
Large lots, direct access from Route 29, and high visibility, a location for a signature office/jobs center; with greater intensity of mixed use and strong live, work, and play options.



Area B

Light Industrial/Old Town District

Continue to promote Old Town as the signature cultural, social and historic hub. Encourage infill housing and adaptive reuse of structures; maintain historic character and scale.



Area C

Greenway & Wellness Mixed Use/Makers District

Maximize use of industrial areas for maker space with a food and arts focus, create connective elements to the greenway, enhance gateway form and function.



Comprehensive Plan Considerations

New Town Mixed Use/New Town District

Character District Summary

Large lots, direct access from Route 29, and high visibility, a location for a **signature office/jobs center**; with greater intensity of **mixed use** and strong live, work, and play options.

Land Use Goal

Support the **revitalization** of the commercial shopping malls with walkable development, green space, public amenities, as well as provide **a location for a major employer**.

Existing Businesses

None – undeveloped.

● Area A - Undeveloped Parcels

- Dobson, David – 21.8 ac.
- Amazon Data Services – 41.7 ac.
(SUP Approval)

Total Undeveloped Area = 63.5 ac.

Comprehensive Plan Considerations

Light Industrial/Old Town District

Character District Summary

Continue to promote Old Town as the signature cultural, social and historic hub. **Encourage infill** housing and **adaptive reuse** of structures; maintain historic character and scale.

Land Use Goal

Include a **mix of infill and new development** that is designed to maintain Old Town's historic character.

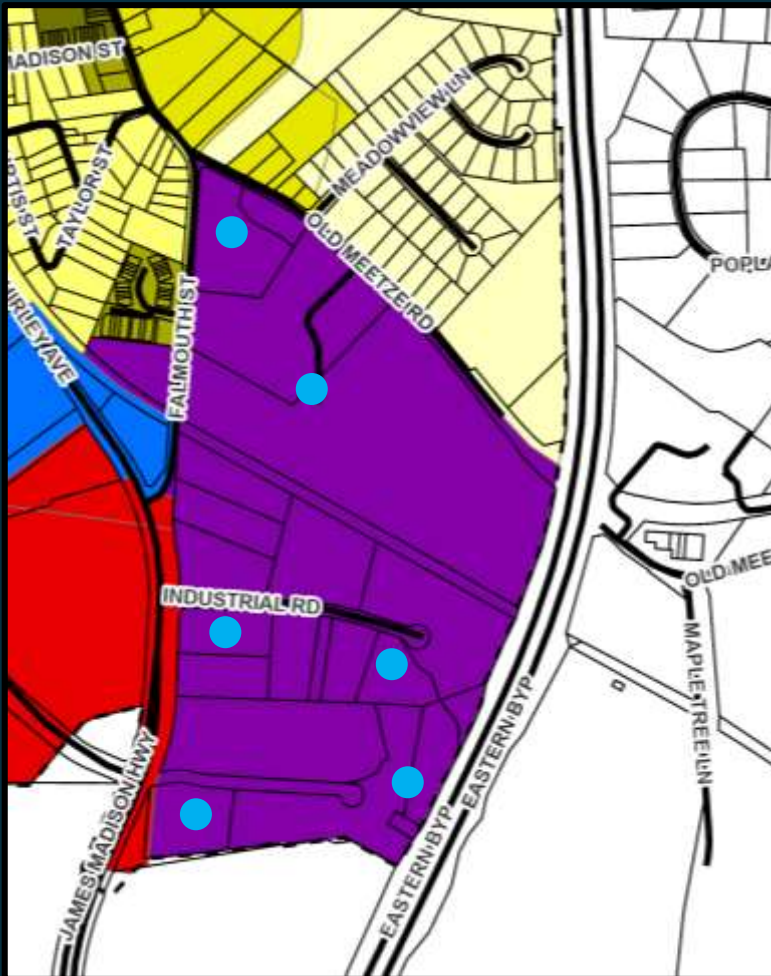
Existing Businesses

- 6 Industrial-type
- 14 Light Industrial/Office
- 4 Assembly



- **Area B - Undeveloped Parcels**
 - Brandon Land Investments/1.2 ac.
 - Town of Warrenton/1.9 ac.
 - Gibson, Lori/0.5 ac.
 - 341 Academy Hill Road LLC/1.8 ac.
 - Walker Dr. Investment Group/3.5 ac. (IPUD - Land Bay E)
 - Springfield Properties LLC/8.5 ac. (IPUD - Land Bays B, C, D)
 - Remland LLC/11.6 ac. (IPUD - Land Bays A, B, C)

Total Undeveloped Area = 29 ac.



Comprehensive Plan Considerations

Greenway & Wellness Mixed Use/Makers District

Character District Summary

Maximize use of industrial areas for maker space with a food and arts focus, create connective elements to the greenway, enhance gateway form and function.

Land Use Goal

Promoted as the southern gateway and maintain critical linkages between education, civic uses, surrounding neighborhoods and the remaining industrial uses in the Town.

Future Land Use Description – Light Industrial

- Incorporate previous uses envisioned for Light Industrial.

Existing Businesses

- 8 Industrial
- 1 Light Industrial/Retail
- 2 Assembly

● Area C - Undeveloped Parcels/Parcels for Redevelopment

- Worsham, Suzanne & William/5.2 ac. (Alwyngton Manor)
- Premium Business Parks International LLC/37.4 ac. (Wire Factory)
- Red Road INC/2.2 ac.
- Brown, Ricky/2.2 ac.
- The Drew Corporation/8.6 ac. (floodplain)
- 819 JMH LLC/3.0 ac. (floodplain)

Total Undeveloped Area = 58.6 ac

Planning Commission Work Session Discussion

April 22, 2025

JLARC Data Centers in Virginia (2024)

Brief Summary of Report Contents:

- Primary financial benefit is during initial construction.
- Tax revenues increase – but are highly variable.
- Exempt from sales tax for computers & equipment; other types of tax exemptions.
- Increasing energy demand & need for electrical power infrastructure - may increase energy costs for all users.
- Use of water for cooling - water demand must be managed to match local capacity to ensure supply for other users.
- Air pollution concerns from use of generators – currently generators cannot be used for principal power source.
- Noise (equipment) and visual (building) impacts to residential areas – localities must consider location and potential impacts.

JLARC report includes recommendations for legislation and policy changes.

The 2025 State data center reform bill (HB1601) was vetoed.

Zoning Ordinance Criteria for Consideration of Text Amendments

When there is a request for a zoning ordinance text amendment, the Planning Commission and Town Council shall consider the following matters:

Section 11-3.9.13

Two Main Considerations for Text Amendments:

1. Whether the proposed text amendment is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.
2. Whether the proposed text amendment is consistent with the intent and purpose of the Zoning Ordinance.

Section 11-3.9.12

Fourteen Additional Considerations – Use only those that are Relevant to the Proposed Text Amendment

1. Does it further the public interest, and conforms with the goals, objectives, and policies of the Comprehensive Plan?
2. Is it consistent with the Future Land Use Plan and the established character and land use patterns?
3. Is it justified by changed/changing conditions?
4. Would it create an isolated district that is unrelated to adjacent districts?
5. Are there now, or could there be built, adequate infrastructure and utilities to serve the use?
6. Is it compatible with properties in the vicinity, and would have no adverse impact on these properties?
7. Are there adequate sites elsewhere in the Town for the use?
8. Would there be traffic impacts that cannot be mitigated?
9. Is there already a reasonable and viable economic use of the property?
10. Would it have a negative impact on natural resources that is not compatible with the Comprehensive Plan?
11. Does it encourage economic development in areas deemed suitable by the Comprehensive Plan, provides desirable employment and enlarges the tax base?
12. Does it consider the current and future needs of the community, as determined by population and economic studies?
13. Does it enhance the opportunity for moderate housing for residents of the Town?
14. Does it negatively effect natural, scenic, archaeological, or historic features of significant importance?

An aerial photograph of a town street, showing a mix of residential and commercial buildings, trees, and parked cars. The street runs vertically through the center of the image. The word "Questions?" is overlaid in the center of the image.

Questions?