

Shedding Light on Development By Right

Warrenton's comprehensive plan draft calls for the creation of mixed-use Character Districts using a streamlined by right zoning for a large range of land uses including nearly all areas currently zoned for industrial and commercial.

By right development refers to projects that are permitted under their local zoning and do not require any legislative action by the Town Council or the Board of Zoning Appeals. Such projects are approved administratively by town staff and do not require public hearings.

In practice, if a developer wants to build a mixed-use structure of residential with a commercial component and it matches the zoning use of the particular parcel, town staff would be able to approve the project without taking it before the Town Council or the Planning Commission.

Why, you may ask, would the town of Warrenton ever want to have development by-right which in turn eliminates public hearings? The answer comes from the Demographic and Housing Analysis White Paper from RKG Associates at the back of the comprehensive plan draft. They contend the Town's land use policies make it difficult to develop higher density housing and the entitlement process to be very time consuming.

Cutting the public out of the land use process makes it easier for developers to build the higher-density, five and six story buildings the plan allows.