





MCPB

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RETAIL MARKET STUDY – PROGRESS BRIEF

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SUMMARY

The purpose of this briefing is twofold: first, to provide the Planning Board with an introductory overview of the retail sector and market in Montgomery County; and second, to provide background on the Countywide Retail Market Assessment Study currently underway.

Retail is an important sector of the Montgomery County economy, supporting nearly 70,000 jobs and occupying approximately 38 million SF of space. Retail uses serve consumer needs in the community, provide social gathering spaces, and activate urban areas. Research & Strategic Projects (RSP) staff will provide the Planning Board with a high-level overview of key concepts, terms, and conditions to better understand the retail sector, such as the types of retail and unique features of retail leases.

In 2017, the division published a [Retail Market Strategy Study](#) that assessed the strengths, challenges, and competitive position of retail in the county. Since then, shifts in consumer behavior, accelerated e-commerce adoption, hybrid work patterns, evolving food service models, and intensifying regional competition have reshaped the function of retail spaces and consumers' experiential expectations.

Montgomery Planning contracted with Econsult Solutions, Inc. to update the 2017 study. The study will:

- Provide an updated profile of retail supply and demand across Montgomery County;
- Assess e-commerce, remote work, and post-pandemic consumer trends' impact on retail;
- Evaluate the needs and challenges of food & beverage, entertainment, and other "third place" uses that contribute to placemaking; assess regional competitiveness and peer jurisdictions in the metropolitan area;
- Identify land-use, zoning, and regulatory impediments to retail activity; and
- Develop recommendations to improve retail performance.

The issues listed above carry broad implications for the design, regulation, and abundance of retail space in the county, impacting our master plan, policy, and regulatory work. The study will help Montgomery Planning staff better understand how recent shifts, current conditions, and future trends in retail influence our plans to ensure retail spaces fully contribute to the vibrant, complete communities and corridors called for in *Thrive Montgomery 2050*.

NEXT STEPS

The consultant, with RSP staff support, has completed the Data Collection & Market Analysis phase—including engagement with Chambers of Commerce, Urban Districts and community groups, Regional Services Centers, County Council and Montgomery Planning staff, industry associations, and individuals active in retail brokerage, development, and operations. Progress continues on policy and trends analyses. The study is scheduled to be completed in Spring 2026. RSP and Econsult Solutions, Inc. staff will return to present the final report to the Planning Board.