

# Montgomery County Housing Preferences Survey

## Scope of Work

**Timeline:** FY 2026 (July 2025 – September 2026)

**Lead Division:** Design, Placemaking & Policy Division – Housing, Zoning, and Infrastructure Team

## Introduction

A Housing Preferences Survey (HPS) is a questionnaire used to gather information about people's preferences and priorities when making housing choices. These surveys help researchers, planners, and policymakers understand what neighborhood characteristics and housing amenities a particular community values and how these desires vary across demographic groups and different geographic contexts. The data collected is often used to plan for current and future housing needs and inform real estate development and policy decisions.

Over the past five years, with the COVID-19 pandemic, a shifting federal policy landscape, and changes in population trends, housing conditions nationally have been significantly affected. During this time, Montgomery County also adopted *Thrive Montgomery 2050* (Thrive 2050), which affirms housing as both a fundamental human right and a central element of equitable and sustainable growth. These broad shifts have been accompanied by changes in people's individual housing preferences – where they want to live, what type of house they want to live in, what public amenities they want near their house, and how much they are willing to pay for those amenities. The result is a housing stock that is misaligned with housing demand, both in quantity and in type of housing.

The HPS in Montgomery County is a first-of-its-kind statistically valid countywide survey that, together with the Housing Needs Assessment (HNA), will serve as a foundation for a future Housing Functional Plan to guide the implementation of the housing goals outlined in Thrive 2050. Findings from the HPS and HNA will provide a more complete understanding of both measurable housing need and community-defined demand, informing future policy, land use strategies, and investment decisions.

This survey has the following objectives:

- Gather a representative and statistically significant sample of county residents.
- Collect data on county residents' housing preferences, priorities, needs, concerns, and challenges.
- Document top housing preferences, priorities, needs, concerns, and challenges at the countywide level and throughout different geographic contexts.
- Understand housing preferences across different demographic groups, i.e., housing tenure, race, age, income, etc.
- Describe implications of these findings for meeting the housing need in the county and how they will inform a future Housing Functional Plan.

- Create a detailed report with informative graphics that presents the county’s top housing preferences, priorities, and concerns.
- Raise awareness about the facts, data, and findings from the HPS with communications strategies that residents, media and decision makers can easily understand.

## Approach and Methodology

The Housing Preferences Survey is a countywide survey to understand better the housing preferences and needs of Montgomery County residents. As this is a primary data collection exercise, findings from this study will rely solely on the information gathered through the housing preferences questionnaire. This survey data will complement the secondary data sources used in the Housing Needs Assessment to provide a complete picture of the housing landscape and inform housing policy.

To ensure that a representative sample of the county’s population is captured, this survey will use methods of oversampling, targeted outreach, and data weighting. The consultant and Planning Staff team will jointly develop the questionnaire and methodology to ensure that respondents can understand the survey and collect the data to meet the study objectives.

Information on the following topics will be collected:

- Demographics (i.e., age, gender, income, race/ethnicity, household size, housing tenure, how long they have resided in current house)
- Satisfaction with current housing (i.e., likes and dislikes of current housing)
- Neighborhood preferences and priorities (i.e., location, safety, environment, community, public amenities, transportation)
- Housing type and characteristic preferences (i.e., unit/building type, unit size, amenities, age)
- Housing affordability (i.e., current cost burden, willingness to pay, future financial concerns)
- Housing challenges (i.e., availability, affordability, safety, amenities, walkability)
- Plans for future housing (i.e., aging in place, barriers, and motivators for moving)
- Housing policy (i.e., favor or oppose specific policies)

The consultant will devise a comprehensive sampling plan (i.e., address-based sampling) based on the level of effort M-NCPPC selects during the procurement process. The consultant should provide cost estimates for surveys with different margins of error. According to the sampling plan, the consultant will create a survey execution strategy to reach a representative and significant sample size.

## Consultant and Staff Roles and Responsibilities

- M-NCPPC will go through the Request for Proposal (RFP) process to select an appropriate consultant to execute the housing preferences survey.
- The consultant will be responsible for developing the survey instrument, creating a representative sampling plan, administering the data collection, conducting the data analysis, and producing a comprehensive report of the survey findings.

- Planning Staff from the Housing, Zoning, and Infrastructure team will manage the consultant through the entire process and provide technical support on the project as needed. Staff will hold bi-weekly check-in meetings with the consultant to get an update on progress, address any challenges in the process, and share notable findings.

## Community and Stakeholder Engagement

- While no formal community or stakeholder engagement sessions are currently defined for the Housing Preferences Survey, the data collection process itself will involve engagement with the community and various stakeholder groups to ensure a representative and statistically significant sample.
- The Planning Board and County Council will be briefed on the findings from the Housing Preferences Survey in July 2026.
- Additional briefings, external stakeholder feedback, and broader community engagement will occur in other related efforts such as a future Housing Functional Plan.

## Tasks

### *Task 1: Internal Team Alignment and Consultant Procurement*

- a. Procure a consultant using the Department's Request for Proposal (RFP) process.
- b. Identify roles and responsibilities across the Housing, Zoning, and Infrastructure team and the selected consultant.
- c. Finalize internal workflow for managing deliverables, drafts, and check-ins with the selected consultant.
- d. Planning Staff will develop approved messaging, create a Housing Preferences Survey webpage located on Montgomery Planning's housing website describing the survey objectives, methodology, and timeline.
- e. Planning Staff will work with Montgomery Planning's Communications Division to develop a communications plan that will identify opportunities, strategies, and tools to effectively convey the project's outcomes.

### *Task 2: Project Kickoff*

- a. Planning Staff will hold a kickoff meeting, preferably in-person, with internal staff and the selected consultant to review the scope of work, refine the survey approach and methodology, and confirm the project schedule.
- b. Establish cadence for bi-weekly check-ins and data sharing protocols between the consultant and Planning Staff.

### *Task 3: Survey Development*

- a. Planning Staff and the selected consultant will jointly design the housing preferences questionnaire that addresses Montgomery County's key housing needs.
- b. The selected consultant will devise a sampling plan to satisfy the level of effort (completion targets and margin of error) selected during the consultant procurement process. Planning Staff anticipate the survey mechanism will be an online survey but is open to other survey options, the consultant recommends.

- c. The consultant will develop a strategy to administer the survey to the selected households that will ensure a meaningfully representative sample. Respondents should reflect the demographic makeup of the surveyed areas, including population, age, sex, race, ethnicity, and other factors, for which Planning Staff will provide the required demographic data.
- d. Translate the finalized survey instrument into Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, French, and additional languages as budget allows.

#### *Task 4: Survey Execution*

- a. The consultant will administer the survey according to the developed sampling plan and collection strategy determined in Task 3. This includes procuring survey materials, identifying potential respondents, contacting potential respondents, incentivizing survey participation, following up with non-respondents, devising the appropriate weighting scheme and calculating the survey's margin of error.
- b. The consultant will monitor the data collection process in real-time to ensure accuracy in the responses and representation in the sample and address any issues that arise while the survey is in the field to allow for course correction and a satisfactory outcome.

#### *Task 5: Data Preparation*

- a. The consultant will compile, clean, and validate the data, and create a fully labeled dataset with a detailed data dictionary.
- b. Where sample size allows, the consultant will weight the survey data to account for any differences in survey response rates among certain groups.
- c. A copy of the survey instrument and the cleaned database in SPSS and Microsoft Excel will be shared with Planning Staff.

#### *Task 6: Data Analysis*

- a. The consultant will analyze survey responses by conducting descriptive statistics for each survey question and perform cross-tabulation analysis across demographic variables as appropriate.
- b. The consultant will summarize key takeaways from each questionnaire module, validate findings, and prepare narratives, visuals, and tables.
- c. The consultant will identify gaps for follow-up and prepare for draft writing.

#### *Task 7: Preliminary Findings*

- a. The consultant will share preliminary findings with Planning Staff, Department leadership and other key internal stakeholders as appropriate.
- b. This opportunity will be used to gather early feedback on emerging data patterns, potential policy implications, and framing considerations.

#### *Task 8: Draft Report*

- a. The consultant will prepare a full draft of the Housing Preferences Survey report that provides a background on the project, outlines the survey approach and methodology, details the findings about residents' housing preferences, and suggests potential policy implications.
- b. Informative data visualizations, summary tables, and an accompanying narrative should be included in the report.

- c. Planning Staff will circulate the draft report internally for review and feedback.

*Task 9: Planning Board and County Council Presentations*

- a. The consultant will produce a summary version of the report and/or slide deck for the Planning Board and County Council.
- b. The consultant, along with Planning Staff, will present final findings of the survey results to the Planning Board, County Council, and other interested parties as requested, totaling between 2 and 5 presentations.

*Task 10: Final Report*

- a. The consultant will revise the draft report based on feedback from the Planning Board and County Council.
- b. The consultant will finalize the report formatting, figures, and accessibility features.