A Review of GSA Leasing in the Greater Washington Metropolitan Region

NUMBER OF LEASES

An initial review of the total number of GSA leases in each jurisdiction suggests that Prince George's County may have a disproportionally limited number of GSA leases. In raw numbers, despite having 32.7% of the region's land area and 22.5% of the population, Prince George's 77 leases represent only 10.1% of the region's total number of GSA leases. The 312 leases in Northern Virginia translate to one lease for every 4,424 people. The corresponding number in Prince George's is 2.5 times larger or 10,926 people per lease.

These differences become even more noteworthy when we take a look at the property uses. Of the 765 GSA leases in the entire Washington metropolitan region, 655 or 85.6% were classified as office space, 90 or 11.8% were warehouse, and 17 or 2.2% were identified as serving some other use. However, in Prince George's County, only 44.2% of the GSA leases were identified as being office space, and 49.3% of the properties were warehouse. In this respect, Prince George's is distinguished as having an even lower share of the GSA leased offices, which garner higher rent and employ more people than warehouses.

GSA in Washington DC Metro Area - Warehouse Locations

RENTABLE SQUARE FEET, TOTAL RENTS AND RENT RATES

Of the region's nearly 53.8 million square feet of rentable space, Prince George's only has 4.1 million square feet, or 7.6% of rented space. Once again, this discrepancy is further exaggerated when we analyze the rentable space by use. Only 5.2% of the GSA's total leased office space is located in Prince George's. In comparison, Arlington County has 9.8 million square feet or 18% of the region's rentable space.

Total GSA rental investment in the greater Washington metropolitan region is $1,562,923,151.65. Just barely more than half of that, or $789 million, is for leases in the District of Columbia. Of the $774 million invested in leases in the D.C. suburbs, 70.9% is in Northern Virginia. Prince George's County only retains 8.3% of the non-District federal leasing dollars, and 4.1% of the entire region's total.

Of the 765 GSA leases in the entire Washington metropolitan region, 455 or 59.8% were classified as office space, 94 or 12.4% were warehouse, and 17 or 2.2% were identified as serving some other use. However, in Prince George's County, only 44.2% of the GSA leases were identified as being office space, and 49.3% of the properties were warehouses. In this respect, Prince George's is distinguished as having an even lower share of the GSA leased offices, which garner higher rent and employ more people than warehouses.

In a snapshot of the region as a whole, Prince George's has 42.2% of the region's GSA leased warehouses and only 5.2% of the region's GSA leased offices. In fact, the GSA leases more warehouse space (2.0 million square feet) in Prince George's County than any other jurisdiction in the region. (Northern Virginia is second, with 1.8 million square feet.) A review of Data 3 shows the location and distribution of GSA leased facilities in DC area.

NUMBER OF LEASES

Northern Virginia Total

Arlington County

Prince George's County

Fairfax County

Montgomery County

Surburban Maryland Total

REGION TOTAL

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In the region as a whole, 85.6% of GSA leases are classified as office space, and 11.8% are classified as warehouse space. In Prince George’s County, only 44.2% of the GSA leases were categorized as office leases, and 49.4% of the properties were categorized as warehouses.

**SQUARE FOOTAGE RENTED BY GSA**

The vast majority of GSA leases in the greater Washington region are less than 50,000 square feet. In fact, the median size is 35,363 square feet, meaning that 58 percent of all GSA leases in the region are less than 35,363 square feet or less. The average GSA rentable space in the region is 70,801 square feet. Leased GSA properties in Prince George’s County tend to be smaller than those in the other jurisdictions across the greater Washington metropolitan region. Prince George’s, the median size is 27,294 square feet, which is 83.8 square feet smaller than the median lease size in each of the region’s other jurisdictions. As a result, GSA properties in Prince George’s County are only 74.0 percent as large as those in Montgomery County, and 72.1 percent of the size of those in the District of Columbia. Once again, Prince George’s share is further demonstrated by analyzing the rentable space per square foot. When viewing these lease categories per office, the average GSA leased space in Prince George’s is 5,944 or 31.3 percent less than the average rentable office space in the rest of the region’s (7,464 square feet).

The combinations of fewer buildings and smaller rentable space has the effect of further minimizing Prince George’s share of GSA’s overall rentable space here in the region. Of the region’s nearly 53.8 million square feet of GSA rentable space, Prince George’s has only 3.1 million, or 7.6 percent. Meanwhile, Northern Virginia has 20.4 million square feet of rentable space, or 75 percent of the regional total. Measured in square feet, only 3.9 percent of total GSA rentable office space in the region is located in Prince George’s County. Northern Virginia houses 1.8 million square feet of office space in Prince George’s County and nearly as much as Fells Church (1.2 million square feet), despite Prince George’s being 244 times larger than Falls Church in land area and 78 times larger in population. In further comparison to Prince George’s County, GSA leases 2.3 times as much office space in Alexandria, 12 times as much in Arlington, and 3.3 times as much in Montgomery County.

Prince George’s county contains 3.9% of the region’s land area, 22.5% of the region’s population, 4.1% of GSA’s local leasing dollars. By comparison, Arlington county contains 3.7% of the region’s population, 19.9% of the region’s land area, 45.0% of the region’s GSA leased offices, and 5.3% of the region’s GSA leased warehouse space. The District of Columbia Northern Virginia Montgomery County Prince George’s County

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Land Area (sq mi)</th>
<th>Population (% of region)</th>
<th>GSA Leaseable Office Space (% of region)</th>
<th>GSA Leaseable Warehouse Space (% of region)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District of Columbia</td>
<td>61.7</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Virginia</td>
<td>2,265</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montgomery County</td>
<td>1,145</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince George’s County</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL RENTS AND RENTAL RATES**

In a snapshot of the region as a whole, despite having 16.1 percent of the region’s overall GSA leases, Prince George’s County has 4.2 percent of the region’s GSA leased warehouse space and only 1.2 percent of the region’s GSA leased offices.
Prince George's County occupies 3.8 percent of the region’s land area and 22.5 percent of the region’s population. Although Prince George’s makes up 33% of the region’s land area and 22.5% of the region’s population, Prince George’s attracts only 5.2% of the region’s GSA leased offices. This distribution is due, in large part, to the Federal Government’s relatively limited presence in Prince George’s.

GSA leases 2.3 times as much office space in Alexandria, 5.2 times as much in Arlington and 3.3 times as much in Montgomery County than it does in Prince George County.

**Commercial Space Availability in Prince George’s County**

In conjunction with this study we also undertook a review of available commercial space in the region. Because the Federal Government’s leasing in Prince George’s County could be limited to the current or most recent two years, the review needed to include Washington, D.C., the Maryland counties of Prince George’s and Montgomery and Arlington County.

The Federal Government’s presence in a community brings with it substantial contracting and leasing opportunities, and in the case of leased space, the value of property taxes paid to state and local governments. The Federal Government compels the reliance on leasing to satisfy emerging needs and support the daily operations of the Federal Government. The Federal Government has indicated that commercial leases are used to meet the majority of new space requirements for traditional office space, and leasing represents an increasing portion of the Federal Government’s total office space.

**Federal job locations**

Despite having 25.7 of the region’s federal workers working in the county, Prince George’s has only 5.2% of the region’s GSA leased office space. In 2000 there were 101,850 federal workers in Prince George’s County. In 2008 according to the Census Bureau, the Federal Government employed 124,637 workers in Prince George’s County. Of these workers 35,777 were part-time jobs.

**WAShINGtoN, DC AREA COMMERCIAL LEASE SPACE AND RATE ANALYSIS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suburb</th>
<th>Average Office Space</th>
<th>Average Office Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alexandria</td>
<td>2.5 million sf</td>
<td>$38.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arlington</td>
<td>1.7 million sf</td>
<td>$39.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District of Columbia</td>
<td>15.0 million sf</td>
<td>$41.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusion**

A review of the commercial office space in the region revealed a substantial large amount of commercial office space in Montogmery and Prince George’s County, along with significant development of additional commercial space in the area.

**The Bottom Line**

The Federal Government’s presence in Prince George’s County has been significant for the local economy. This report focused on an analysis of these GSA leasing data for the greater Washington metropolitan region, and evaluates the distribution of commercial leases across the region, comparing Prince George’s County to other jurisdictions, with respect to the number of leases, the amount of commercial office space, relates value, and commercial office space availability.

**GSA leases 2.3 times as much office space in Alexandria, 5.2 times as much in Arlington and 3.3 times as much in Montgomery County than it does in Prince George County.**

**The Federal Government’s presence in a community brings with it substantial contracting and leasing opportunities, and in the case of leased space, the value of property taxes paid to state and local governments.**

**The relative limited Federal funds available for the construction of new buildings and the capital allocation process used by the Federal Government compels the reliance on leasing to satisfy emerging government space needs. The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) serves as the landlord for the Federal Government, coordinating the manner in which Federal funds are used to meet the majority of new space requirements for traditional office space, and leasing represents an increasing portion of the Federal Government’s total real estate portfolio. GSA has seen an almost four-fold increase in the amount of space leased over the last four decades. Based on these facts, the analysis that follows focuses on the distribution and value of leases administrated through GSA in the greater Washington, D.C. metropolitan region, comparing the Federal Government’s leasing activity in Prince George’s County with federal leases in other local jurisdictions.**

**This report focuses on an analysis of these GSA leasing data for the greater Washington, D.C. metropolitan region. It evaluates the distribution of GSA commercial leases across the region, comparing Prince George’s County to other jurisdictions, with respect to the number of leases, the amount of commercial space, relates value, and commercial office space availability.**

**DATA ANALYSIS**

In the Washington metropolitan region, the county that presents the lowest cost alternative, Prince George’s county, retains the lowest percentage of GSA leasing dollars.

**Total GSA rental expenditures in the greater Washington metropolitan region are approximately $1.6 billion, or 37 percent of the total paid on all GSA leases nationwide.**
### DATA ANALYSIS

**Total GSA rental expenditures in the greater Washington metropolitan region** represent approximately 16.9 percent of all government spending in the region. In 2005, the total was $700 million, or 1.2 percent of the total GDP for the region. Despite making up 32.7 percent of the land area in the region and 39 percent of the population, Arlington County’s share of the $29.06 per square foot asking rent in Prince George’s is lowest in the region (by contrast, the asking rent in Alexandria is $31.24 per square foot). Alexandria’s share of the region’s GSA office lease total is 9.23 percent. Meanwhile, in Arlington County, which only contains 5.3 percent of the region’s population and less than 2 percent (26 square miles) of the region’s total, the vast majority of which is Fairfax County at 395 square miles or slightly less than 27 percent of the region’s total.

**Key demographic information** shows a breakdown of the region’s population, education, and employment. In the 2005 U.S. Census, Prince George’s County had a population of 841,315 people, making it the third largest county in the region. Despite having 25.7 percent of the region’s federal workforce residing in the county, only 8.1 percent of the region’s Federal Government civilian workforce is located in Prince George’s County. The county’s share of the region’s GSA office lease total is 3.9 percent. When looking solely at GSA leases categorized as offices, rent paid out on leases in Prince George’s is $11.3 million, which is only 10.9 percent of the region’s total GSA office space. Despite making up 5.3 percent of the region’s population and 17 percent of the land (compared to its proportion of the total population and land), Prince George’s County, which contains 3.9 percent of the region’s total GSA office lease total, is 4.8 times the corresponding amount in the larger and more populous Prince George’s County. The total average rent paid per foot squared (and total square footage) for the region is $29.06. Prince George’s County’s GSA leased total rent paid per square foot is only $17.11 per person. However, when broken down by the metropolitan areas, the average is $27.08 per square foot for the region. When broken down by the region’s counties, the average is $29.06 per square foot throughout the rest of the region.

**Employment by Place of Residence.** According to the U.S. Census, Prince George’s County is a remarkable anomaly as it attracts the greatest number of Federal Government civilian workers relative to its metropolitan area. Prince George’s County is home to 8.1 percent of the region’s Federal Government civilian workforce, which is significantly higher than the county’s share of the region’s population (5.3 percent) and land area (4.1 percent). Prince George’s County also represents the lowest cost alternative for the Federal Government as the lowest cost alternative to lease space in the region. In 2005, the average GSA office space annual lease cost in Prince George’s County was $17.11 per square foot. Rent paid out on leases in Prince George’s County represents only 1 percent of the total GSA leasing dollars in the region. Meanwhile, in Arlington County (11.3 times that of Prince George’s) and $517.81 per person (6.8 times that of Prince George’s). When measured in terms of the average cost per square mile (or $/square mile) for leases in Prince George’s, the average is $1.5 million per square mile throughout the rest of the region. More specifically, we have shown that:

- Despite having 10.7 percent of the land and 21.2 percent of the population in the region, Prince George’s County attracts only 7 percent of the region’s GSA office lease dollars.
- When measured in terms of the average cost per square mile (or $/square mile) for leases in Prince George’s, the average is $1.5 million per square mile throughout the rest of the region.

**Job locations.** Despite having 25.7 percent of the region’s federal workforce residing in the county, only 8.1 percent of the region’s GSA office space was located in Prince George’s County in 2005 according to the U.S. Census. Among the 1,487 square miles that comprise the region, 444 square miles, or slightly less than 27 percent of the region’s total, the vast majority of which is Fairfax County at 395 square miles or slightly less than 27 percent of the region’s total. For the purposes of this analysis, the region’s counties are categorized by their respective GSA leasing dollars. By far, GSA leases 2.3 times as much office space in Alexandria, 5.2 times as much in Arlington and 3.3 times as much in Montgomery County than it does in Prince George’s County.

**CONCLUSIONS**

- A lack of available office space is not a significant challenge in Prince George’s County. In fact, GSA leasing in Prince George’s could be linked to absence of space.
- Although GSA office leasing in Prince George’s is among the lowest in the region, it attracted 18.7 percent of the region’s GSA leasing dollars. Prince George’s County is considered lower cost area in similar to Prince George’s for the leading metropolitan areas.
- Prince George’s share of the region’s GSA leasing dollars is lowest in the region. Meanwhile, in Arlington County, which contains 11.3 times that of Prince George’s, the average is $27.08 per square foot for the region. When broken down by the metropolitan areas, the average is $29.06 per square foot throughout the rest of the region.
- Rent paid out on leases in Prince George’s is $11.3 million, which is only 10.9 percent of the region’s total GSA office space. Despite making up 5.3 percent of the region’s population and 17 percent of the land (compared to its proportion of the total population and land), Prince George’s County, which contains 3.9 percent of the region’s total GSA office lease total, is 4.8 times the corresponding amount in the larger and more populous Prince George’s County. The total average rent paid per foot squared (and total square footage) for the region is $29.06. Prince George’s County’s GSA leased total rent paid per square foot is only $17.11 per person. However, when broken down by the region’s counties, the average is $29.06 per square foot throughout the rest of the region.

### WASHINGTON D.C. AREA COMMERCIAL LEASE SPACE AND RATE ANALYSIS

**Average of Region**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metropolitan Area</th>
<th>Average of Region</th>
<th>Average of County</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Montgomery County</td>
<td>82,524,782 sf</td>
<td>9,646,050 sf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prince George's County</td>
<td>101,740,728 sf</td>
<td>12,788,433 sf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandria</td>
<td>12,788,433 sf</td>
<td>348,000 sf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arlington</td>
<td>12,788,433 sf</td>
<td>348,000 sf</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rental Space**

- **Montgomery County**
  - Average of Region: $31.24 psf
  - Average of County: $17.11 psf
- **Prince George's County**
  - Average of Region: $29.00 psf
  - Average of County: $17.11 psf
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  - Average of County: $17.11 psf
- **Arlington**
  - Average of Region: $31.24 psf
  - Average of County: $17.11 psf

**Geographic Analysis**

- **Rentable Square Footage**
  - Arlington County: 12,788,433 sf
  - Montgomery County: 82,524,782 sf
  - Prince George's County: 101,740,728 sf
- **Average of Region**
  - Average of Region: 82,524,782 sf
  - Average of County: 12,788,433 sf
### INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

At the request of the Prince George’s County Economic Development Corporation, the National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education and the University of Maryland’s Real Estate Development Corporation, this report has been prepared. The goal of the report is to analyze the Federal Government’s leasing activity in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan region and to determine how the Federal Government’s leasing decisions, particularly decisions related to siting, can have impacts on real estate trends throughout the region. As such, the report aims to provide insights into how the Federal Government’s leasing decisions can affect the real estate market and inform policymakers and stakeholders in the region.

### COMMERCIAL LEASING

#### INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

This report focuses on an analysis of two data sets for the purpose of understanding the Federal Government’s leasing activity in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan region. The first data set is the GSA real estate database, which contains information on all GSA commercial leases across the region, including Prince George’s County, in addition to other jurisdictions and the Federal Government. The second data set is the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS), which provides data on the number of employees, the type of employment, and the location of those employees in the region. By combining these two data sets, the report aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the Federal Government’s leasing activity and its impact on the real estate market in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan region.

#### DATA ANALYSIS

- **Total GSA rental expenditure in the greater Washington metropolitan region approaches $3.8 billion in 2020 alone, it was estimated that the federal procurement dollars spent on real estate in the region exceeded $1.2 billion.**

#### KEY DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

- **Land Area:**
  - **Prince George’s County:** 841,315 acres
  - **Montgomery County:** 444 square miles
  - **Arlington County:** 200 square miles

- **Population:**
  - **Prince George’s County:** 841,315 people
  - **Montgomery County:** 1.0 million
  - **Arlington County:** 322,112 people

#### BENEFITS OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT COMMUNITY PRESENCE

- **Employment:**
  - **Prince George’s County:** 33% of the region's land area and 22.5% of the local population
  - **Arlington County:** 12.7 million people resided in the greater Washington region in 2006.
  - **Montgomery County:** 10.0 percent and 20.8 percent, respectively. In comparison to Prince George’s County where more employees live.

#### WASHINGTON, D.C. AREA COMMERCIAL LEASE SPACE AND RATE ANALYSIS

- **Rentable Square Footage (RSF):**
  - **Montgomery County:** 2,900,000 RSF
  - **Arlington County:** 2,300,000 RSF

- **Average Rent (PSF):**
  - **Montgomery County:** $31.24 PSF
  - **Arlington County:** $22.10 PSF

- **Percentage of GSA Leases:**
  - **Prince George’s County:** 5.7% of the total GSA office lease dollars
  - **Montgomery County:** 10.0% of the total GSA office lease dollars
  - **Arlington County:** 12.7% of the total GSA office lease dollars

### CONCLUSIONS

- Despite having 25.7% of the region’s federal workforce, Prince George’s County has only 5.7% of the total GSA office lease dollars in the region.
- The relative aff ordability of acquiring commercial office space in Prince George’s County, which is nearly half the $30.16 spent in Montgomery County and only 3.0 percent of the amount paid in Arlington County.
- A review of the commercial office space in the region revealed a substantial large amount of commercial office space throughout the region.

### Washington Metropolitan Region, the county that presents the lowest cost alternative, Prince George’s county, retains the lowest percentage of GSA leasing dollars.

- **Total rental expenditure in the greater Washington metropolitan region approaches $3.8 billion in 2020 alone.**

#### COMMERCIAL SPACE AVAILABILITY IN PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY

- In conclusion, with this study we also undertook a review of available commercial office space in the region. A significant amount of office leasing in Prince George’s could be linked to its limited presence. In 2016, 36% of GSA office leasing in Prince George’s County was occupied. This is in contrast to the trend in other counties where the Federal Government spends far more on GSA leasing dollars in Montgomery than in Prince George’s County.

### CONCLUSIONS

- The 2.9 million square feet of vacant or pipeline commercial space in Prince George’s is equivalent to 7.1% of the space currently leased. This data suggests that there is limited opportunity for a growing federal presence in Prince George’s. However, the future implications for the commercial office space in Prince George’s are not examined in this report.

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### Washington Metropolitan Region, the county that presents the lowest cost alternative, Prince George’s county, retains the lowest percentage of GSA leasing dollars.
The vast majority of GSA leases in the greater Washington region are less than 50,000 square feet. In fact, the median space size is 33,301 square feet, meaning that 50 percent of GSA leases in the region are the 33,301 square feet or less. The average GSA rentable space is in the region is 78 times larger than the median space size of a GSA lease. The median space size of a lease in Prince George’s County is 26,654 square feet, or 77 percent of the average size of a lease in the region. The average space size in Prince George’s County is approximately 7,933 square feet larger than the average space size in the region.

In the region as a whole, 85.6% of GSA leases are classified as office space, and 11.8% are classified as warehouse space. In Prince George’s County, only 44.2% of the GSA leases were categorized as office leases, and 49.4% of the properties were categorized as warehouses.

### SQUARE FOOTAGE RENTED BY GSA

The combination of fewer leases and smaller rentable spaces has the effect of further narrowing Prince George’s share of GSA’s overall share of office space in the region. Of the region’s nearly 20.4 million square feet of GSA rentable space, Prince George’s only has 4.1 million, or 7.6 percent. Meanwhile, Northern Virginia has 20.4 million square feet, or 78 percent of the regional total.

In square feet, only 19 percent of GSA’s entire lease office space in the region is located in Prince George’s County. GSA leases 2.3 times as much offce space in Prince George’s County and nearly six times as much in Falls Church (11.7 million square feet), despite Prince George’s being 244 times larger than Falls Church in land area and 78 times larger in population. In further comparison to Prince George’s County, GSA leases 2.3 times as much office space in Alexandria, 12 times as much in Arlington, and 3.1 times as much in Montgomery.

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