



Introduction

The Montgomery County 1997 Census Update Survey is the seventh household poll conducted by the County Planning Board since 1974. Undertaken on the fourth and seventh years between the national decennial censuses, the Census Update is a sample mail survey whose design, data collection and analysis are managed by the Research and Technology Center of the Montgomery County Planning Board. The survey enjoys a long history of being a valuable information source characterizing the County's demographic and socio-economic changes. Many of the questions serve to update the basic population and housing data provided in the federal U.S. Census. Additional questions provide improved information with a local slant on housing, jobs, income, and transportation characteristics and their interrelationships for the County and its subareas.

In this report, comparisons are made, where data permit, between 1987 and 1997 survey data and with the 1990 U.S. Census data. These comparisons depict the dynamics of growth and changes in Montgomery County. This report summarizes County-wide changes in population, housing, mobility, employment, and income. Most of the analysis describes the County's household population. The Census Update analysis provides background material for the upcoming 2000 U.S. Census.

The Montgomery County Department of Park and Planning and Montgomery County government agencies as well as private and nonprofit organizations rely on the survey's population and housing data. By describing the characteristics of appropriate population groups the survey results can:

- help planners decide where to build roads, parks, libraries, senior centers, and other facilities.
- form the basis for county population and school enrollment forecasts.
- assist planning for County services such as child and elderly care, libraries, affordable housing.
- determine the need for retail development by describing the characteristics of households within the trade areas.
- support businesses in locating new stores and target potential customers.
- help social service agencies and non-profits to obtain federal grants.
- facilitate transportation planning by describing current means of travel, commuting patterns, and other indicators of transportation needs from increases in housing and jobs.

Beginning in May 1997, 22,000 surveys were mailed to a carefully designed sample of Montgomery County households. Approximately 15,000 households responded to the mailed questionnaire, which asked for detailed demographic and socio-economic data. An excellent response rate of 66 percent was achieved. This outstanding return reflects the civic mindedness of Montgomery County residents. The results were tabulated and then statistically adjusted using known household and school enrollment distributions. As with any survey, certain subpopulations are under-represented in the

final analysis. These hard to reach groups often include minority households, young adults, and low-income households. A description of the methodology underlying the 1997 Census Update Survey and a copy of the questionnaire are found in the appendix.