

FALL 2025



Washington, DC

RETAIL STRATEGY & STUDY RFP



Washington, DC Retail Strategy & Study RFP | Fall 2025

1 | Background & Overview

The Washington, DC Economic Partnership (WDCEP) seeks a qualified consultant with demonstrated expertise in the retail industry, real estate, and consumer behavior to conduct a Retail Study (Study) of the District of Columbia (District). [WDCEP](#) will undertake this Study with the support of the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development ([DMPED](#)).

WDCEP and DMPED will use the results of the Study to inform retail attraction strategies, prioritize place-based investments, and develop policies and incentives to enable a vibrant and healthy retail market in the District.

WDCEP is a nonprofit, public-private partnership that leads business attraction and retention for Washington, DC. DMPED is the District government agency responsible for assisting the Mayor in the coordination, planning, supervision, and execution of economic development efforts in the District of Columbia.

For purposes of this Study, "retail" should not be limited to the Retail Trade sector (NAICS 44-45). Other categories, such as food & beverage, health & wellness, and culture & entertainment users should be considered. The Consultant may recommend other categories for inclusion.

1.1 | Study Goals

The Study will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the District's retail market; identify the District's core retail nodes, including a deep dive into the Downtown retail submarket; analyze industry and consumer trends that are driving growth of key retail segments; identify growth opportunities for the District's retail market and core retail nodes, including retailers that are viable prospects for attraction; and recommend a toolkit of incentives and regulations that support the growth of the retail industry.

1.2 | Study Deliverables

The Consultant will deliver a fully designed report and a complementary presentation, along with associated data & research. These deliverables will require DMPED and WDCEP approval before final acceptance.

1.3 | Study Timeline

The goal is to have insights from the Study's findings no later than **February 20, 2026**. Please address the feasibility of completing the project within this timeframe in your proposal.

1.4 | Project Team

The Project Team will consist of representatives from DMPED and WDCEP. The Project Team will provide feedback and overall guidance for the Study.

1.5 | Budget

Cost will be one of the factors considered when selecting the winning proposal. The anticipated budget range is \$200,000-\$250,000. Bidders should provide a detailed breakdown of the level of effort and costs associated with each task.

2 | Project Scope

2.1 | Task 1: Project Management

1. The Consultant shall attend a kick-off meeting with WDCEP and DMPED to review project goals and expectations for all contract tasks.
2. The Consultant shall provide a project work plan for the Retail Strategy, to include a schedule of deliverables and resource allocation, and any Tasks and Deliverables completed by subconsultants.
3. The Consultant shall lead the bi-weekly project management meetings with the project team through the term of the contract.
4. The Consultant shall provide monthly status reports of completed milestones and progress towards upcoming deliverables throughout the term of the contract. Reports shall include progress on task completion, bullet points outlining work completed on each task, a list of deliverables completed each month, and documentation of delays or challenges.

Task Deliverables

2.1.1 Host the kick-off meeting and provide agendas for the bi-weekly meetings with the project team.

2.1.2 Provide an initial project work plan for approval, including schedule & deadlines, for the Retail Study¹

2.1.3 Participate in bi-weekly project planning meetings for the Retail Study

2.1.4 Provide monthly project progress reports for the Retail Study

2.2 | Task 2: Review Previous Reports and Data

The Consultant shall review findings from previously completed retail studies, corridor analyses, stakeholder engagements, and other background materials related to each corridor. The Consultant shall also identify supplemental data to be collected to support the evaluation, including a recommendation for the data to be collected and whether the data could be provided by the Consultant and/or WDCEP/DMPED. Existing data and studies shall include the following:

¹ Key project milestones (TBD w/ consultant) may require the Project Team's approval before proceeding with additional work.

Item No.	Document Type	Title and Link	Date
1	Report	Retail node categorization, DMPED	2025
2	Report	Priority Retail Corridor Market Analysis, DMPED	2025
3	Plan	Downtown Public Realm Plan , DC Office of Planning	2024
4	Plan	Downtown Action Plan , Downtown BID and Golden Triangle BID	2024
5	Report	2024 Neighborhood Profiles , Washington, DC Economic Partnership	2024
6	Report	2024 Development Report , Washington, DC Economic Partnership	2024
7	Report	2023 State of Downtown Report , DowntownDC BID	2023
8	Study	Chinatown Corridor Study , DowntownDC BID	2021
9	Report	H Street/Benning Road Streetcar Project Historic Architectural Survey , HDR Engineering and the District Department of Transportation	2013
10	Plan	DC Vibrant Retail Streets Toolkit , Streetsense, Office of Planning	2012
11	Report	DC Retail Action Roadmap , DC Office of Planning	2010
12	Report	H St NE Neighborhood Retail Submarket Assessment (NRSA) and Demand Analysis , DC Office of Planning, Jair Lynch, Washington DC Economic Partnership, Streetsense	2009

2.3 | Task 3: District Retail Market Assessment & SWOT

The Consultant shall use the data and studies evaluated in Task 2 along with other expert insights (e.g. from brokers, site selectors, property owners, operators, Business Improvement Districts, and Main Streets) to define the character of the District's retail market, diagnose the strengths and weaknesses for the District's retail market, identify retail categories that are overrepresented and underrepresented, and identify retail categories that are growth opportunities for the District.

Task Deliverables:

2.3.1 Present methodologies, retail categorizations, and frameworks that WDCEP and DMPED can replicate for future use.

2.3.2 Analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the District's current retail market

2.3.3 Analysis of the retail categories where the District is overrepresented or underrepresented, on a per-capita basis (or corresponding benchmark) compared to similar national retail markets

2.3.4 Analysis of the primary retail demand drivers citywide

2.3.5 Breakdown of the existing consumer segments for the District's retail market and consumer segments that could drive further growth

2.3.6 Narrative description of the District's retail identity based on strengths, weaknesses, and consumer segments, and a comparison to similar regional and national retail destinations

2.3.7 Analysis of retailers that are expanding regionally & nationally and those that would complement the District's retail identity and growth opportunities, including a description of the retail offering, market size, current physical store presence, expansion plans (if known), real estate requirements, co-tenancy, and consumer profile.

3.8 Analysis of retailers that are contracting and have closed or are at risk of closing locations in the District. Identify strategic opportunities to reposition sites and/or backfill closed locations, including alternative uses, including temporary uses, and informed by examples in other jurisdictions if available.

3.9 Create a Growth Sector Matrix linking retail categories to demographic segments

2.4 | Task 4: National Retail Industry Trends and Growth Drivers for DC

The Consultant shall provide expert analysis on the retail industry and consumer trends nationwide and provide insight to WDCEP and DMPED about retail categories that are experiencing growth, consumer behavior that is driving retail activity, and trends in retail real estate leasing and incentives. This analysis will inform target retail categories for the District and incentives or regulatory changes that would enable successful retail growth in DC.

Task Deliverables:

2.4.1 Analysis of retail categories that are experiencing growth nationally that could be successful in the District's retail market, including a description of the category, example retailers, evolving needs and trends, and evidence of the retail category's financial and physical growth.

2.4.2 Analysis of national consumer spending trends for brick-and-mortar retail, including the demographic segments driving retail growth, type of retail products or services in demand, experiential retail and service-led retail formats, and the impact and trends of e-commerce.

2.4.3 Analysis of trends in retail real estate leasing for retail segments that are growing and are appropriate for the District's retail market, including cost of buildout, tenant improvement allowances offered by property owners, lease terms, square footage of retail space, space layout, and characteristics of neighborhoods in demand for the retail segment.

2.4.4 Trends in key retail categories for the District, including industry growth (or contraction) and consumer behavior, including (but not limited to) pharmacy, grocery (including full-service and smaller, neighborhood markets), fashion, home goods, specialty retail, food and beverage, family-focused concepts, fitness, health and beauty, and entertainment.

2.5 | Task 5: Priority Retail Corridor Assessment and Strategy

The Consultant shall identify and define all major retail nodes in the District that contribute to the District's retail strengths and identity, and recommend the retail nodes where the District should prioritize further growth and investment. The Consultant should also provide qualitative insights based on conversations with retail brokers, developers/landlords, and operators.

Task Deliverables

2.5.1 Desktop review of the primary retail nodes in the District that contribute to the District's retail strengths and identity, including trade area, retail supply and inventory, core demand drivers, customer profile, competing or overlapping retail nodes in the District, brand identity, and the neighborhoods that are immediately within or adjacent to the retail node.

2.5.2 Desktop and in-person review of the retail nodes that have the greatest potential to increase total retail spending in the District (instead of shifting retail spending between nodes), reduce retail leakages, and/or bring additional customers from outside DC, including retail category growth potential and key retail attraction targets² within the node, target customers for those categories, and revenue potential from the growth of the retail node.

2.5.3 Deep dive analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the Downtown retail submarket, primarily concentrated along F Street NW (6th Street to 15th Street NW) and 7th Street (Penn Ave to Mass Ave., NW), including existing retail inventory, retail vacancy, retail real estate (typical size and configuration of space), core customer profile, demand drivers, visitor trends, retail category gaps, and recommended categories for retail growth. The Consultant should plan to meet with key stakeholders (e.g., BID, major landlords, brokers) and tour the area in person.

2.6 | Task 6: Incentives and Regulatory Environment

The Consultant shall evaluate existing retail incentives offered by the District and comparable jurisdictions, and provide recommendations for a policy toolkit for supporting retail growth.

Task Deliverables

2.6.1 Evaluate existing business environment and regulatory structures in DC that impede retail growth, including (but not limited to) liquor license moratoria, zoning codes, taxes, and permitting & licensing requirements, and the potential impacts of these structures on retail leasing and retail growth.

2.6.2 Assess current retail incentives offered by the District, including Tax Increment Financing (TIF), tax credits, tax abatements, and grants, and evaluate utilization, gaps, and ROI potential.

² Attraction targets are named retailers WDCEP/DMPED should target to expand in the node. Recommendations should consider local, national, and international retailers.

2.6.3 Report of financial incentives offered in other jurisdictions comparable to the District that support retail leasing, and regulatory requirements that reduce friction in the process of operating a retail location.

2.6.4. Provide recommendations for retail incentives and regulatory structures the District could consider to support retail growth, including a summary of the structure, cost, and anticipated impact.

2.7 | Task 7: Evaluate the District's Retail Strategy: Assessment & SWOT

The Consultant will evaluate the District's current approach to retail attraction, identifying internal strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The Consultant will provide clear & actionable recommendations to strengthen the effectiveness of the city's retail attraction program. The assessment should analyze existing programs, strategies, resources, success metrics & KPIs, and partnerships, while benchmarking against best practices from both the public & private sectors.

Task Deliverables

2.7.1 Provide a clear, prioritized roadmap that balances near-term opportunities with long-range vision, ensuring the District's retail attraction program(s) are aligned with the Report's findings, and the city is well-positioned to attract & retain retail businesses. Include any applicable costs for implementation recommendations (if known).

2.8 | Task 8: Final Deliverables

2.8.1 Draft reports provided at key project milestones (TBD w/ Consultant)

2.8.2 Draft presentations to WDCEP and DMPED leadership at key project milestones (TBD w/ Consultant)

2.8.3 Presentation of insights, findings, and recommendations to key stakeholders³

2.8.4 Final presentation in PowerPoint format, designed with WDCEP/DMPED branding guidelines, highlighting key findings & recommendations. Consultant should anticipate a minimum of three rounds of drafts once the initial "final" presentation is provided.⁴

2.8.5 Final report in PDF format designed with WDCEP/DMPED branding guidelines. Consultant should anticipate a minimum of three rounds of drafts once the initial "final" report is provided.⁵

2.8.6 All data used and collected in the Report's analysis

³ Consultant should assume presenting to three different groups of stakeholders

⁴ Each draft will require review & approval from the Project Team

⁵ Each draft will require review & approval from the Project Team

3 | Submission Guidelines & Timeline

All proposals must include detailed descriptions of the proposed methodology(s), strategies to achieve desired results detailed in the scope of work, proposed data sources, project timelines, deliverables, and cost.

Respondents may suggest alternative or additional tasks they believe will better achieve the goals and objectives of the Study. The methodology should clearly demonstrate how each task will be completed and how, collectively, the tasks will accomplish the Study's objectives.

Interested bidders must submit proposals no later than **5:00 pm Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) on Monday, October 6, 2025**, to rfp@wdcep.com.

Proposals must include the following topics:

1. The bidder's qualifications, team members contributing to the Study (including any sub-contractors and/or joint venture partners), capabilities to produce the required deliverables, and relevant work experience, including project examples, past clients, and references;

2. Proposed workplan, strategies, methodologies, data sources, and task schedule;

Proposals should address the feasibility of completing the Study by February 20, 2026. If this timeline is found to be infeasible, please provide an alternative timeline that incorporates the tasks above.

3. Staffing plan, rate schedule, task & deliverable breakdown, and anticipated cost per task, and total project cost; and

Respondents may include additional services in the proposal beyond their initial budget & scope that they feel will enhance the overall Study and support DC's retail attraction strategy. Any additional services should be clearly denoted in the proposal.

4. Any assumptions underlying the workplan, staffing plan, or budget.

Proposals shall be submitted in a PDF file not to exceed 15 pages and 25 MB. Examples of past work submitted as attachments will not count toward the page limit, but each file may not exceed 25 MB. Proposals submitted by other means aside from email will not be accepted. Please include the primary point of contact, including email address and phone number.

Questions about the proposal will not be taken by phone, but may be submitted to rfp@wdcep.com. Answers will be posted on the [following site](#). If you wish to obtain access to the site, please email rfp@wdcep.com. Questions submitted after October 1 may not be answered.

A conference call to address questions will be held on **September 24 at 11am (EST)**. Prospective bidders interested in participating in the conference call should email rfp@wdcep.com by **September 23 at 5pm (EST)** to receive call-in details and notice of any scheduling changes.

If necessary, competitive bidders will be provided an opportunity to submit written best and final offers at a designated date and time.

WDCEP reserves the right to cancel or reissue all or part of this RFP at any time, without incurring any liability from prospective providers.

3.1 | Proposed Timeline

- RFP Released: September 15
- Conference Call: September 24 at 11am (EST)
- **RFP Responses Due: October 6 by 5pm (EST)**
- RFP Winner Selected: Week of October 13 – 17th
- Project Kick-off: Week of October 20 – 24th
- Final Report Due: February 20, 2026

Please note that the timeframes listed above are subject to change at the Project Team's sole discretion.