



Montgomery County Council

For Immediate Release

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COUNCIL APPROVES RESTRICTIONS ON “BIG BOX” STORES IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY

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The Montgomery County Council gave approval today to a measure that provides for a higher level of review for certain combination retail -- or “big box” -- stores that might seek to locate in the County in the future.

The zoning text amendment passed today would require any retail store in certain commercial zones whose floor area exceeds 120,000 square feet and includes a pharmacy and full-line grocery store to obtain a special exception from the County Board of Appeals.

Club and membership stores would be unaffected by the measure. The city of Gaithersburg already limits the “footprint” of commercial buildings to 80,000 square feet, while Rockville’s limit for retail stores is 65,000 square feet.

“This amendment is in the public interest,” said Councilmember George Leventhal. “It doesn’t ban any retailer. It does, however, require a project to go through a higher level of review, with an opportunity for public input. It’s entirely appropriate to try to concentrate business expansion into ‘smart growth’ areas.”

“This is an initiative in favor of small business, in favor of the little guy,” said Councilmember Tom Perez. “All too often, ‘big box’ chain stores roll into town, put small locally-owned firms out of business, and then take off for greener pastures – leaving acres of concrete parking lot and a huge unrentable property behind.”

The regulation goes into effect November 29.

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