



## How to Read QMI Data as a Retail Site Selection Tool

In the fast-paced world of commercial real estate, selecting the right site for retail investments can make or break a portfolio. Traditional tools like U.S. Census data have long been staples for gauging market potential, but they often fall short in today's dynamic environment. Enter Quick Move-In (QMI) data—inventory homes that builders offer for immediate occupancy. This real-time indicator provides a fresh lens for site selection, particularly for single tenant retail properties. By tracking QMI pricing and availability, investors can pinpoint areas of growth, assess local economic health, and align with burgeoning new home communities that drive long-term value.

Our SAAS platform vets single tenant listings and land opportunities daily across the entire U.S., while monitoring QMI inventory in 13 states (with expansion underway as we add clients). This blog delves into why QMI data outperforms dated methods, how it reflects current market realities, and practical ways to extrapolate purchasing power from it—all tailored to enhance retail site selection strategies.

### The Limitations of Traditional Methods: Why Census Data Falls Short

For decades, investors have relied on U.S. Census Bureau data for demographic insights, such as median household income, population growth, and housing statistics. While comprehensive, this data is inherently lagged. The decennial Census provides a snapshot every 10 years, with interim updates via the American Community Survey (ACS) rolling out annually but based on multi-year averages. For instance, 2024 ACS data released in late 2025 might reflect trends from 2020-2024, missing recent shifts like post-pandemic migration, inflation spikes, or regional booms.

This delay makes Census data a poor predictor in volatile markets. Consider a suburb experiencing rapid influx due to remote work trends: By the time Census numbers catch up, prime retail sites may already be saturated or undervalued opportunities missed. In retail site selection, where timing is critical, using outdated data can lead to misjudging demand for single tenant retail—like convenience stores, pharmacies, or quick-service restaurants—that thrive on local foot traffic and spending.

## The Edge of QMI Data: Real-Time Market Reflection

QMI homes represent builders' unsold inventory, priced for quick sales with incentives like rate buydowns or upgrades. Unlike Census data, QMI pricing is extremely current, updated daily or weekly by builders responding to immediate market conditions. This makes it a superior tool for retail site selection:

- **Timeliness and Responsiveness:** QMI prices adjust in real time to factors like interest rates, supply chain issues, and buyer demand. For example, if mortgage rates dip (as they did slightly in early 2026), QMI prices might stabilize or rise, signaling strong buyer interest. In contrast, Census housing data might not reflect this until the next ACS release.
- **Geographic Precision:** QMI data is hyper-local, tied to specific communities or ZIP codes. Platforms like ours aggregate this across states, allowing investors to drill down to areas near proposed retail sites. If QMI inventory is low and prices are climbing in a neighborhood, it indicates robust demand—perfect for anchoring single tenant retail.
- **Predictive Power for Growth:** High QMI turnover (e.g., homes selling within 30-60 days) forecasts population influx, which boosts retail viability. New home communities often cluster around amenities, creating ecosystems where retail investors can capitalize on increased traffic.

In essence, QMI data acts as a "live pulse" of the housing market, far outperforming Census lags. A 2025 study from the National Association of Home Builders noted that QMI sales correlate more closely with economic indicators like job growth than historical Census trends, making it ideal for forward-looking decisions.



## Extrapolating Purchasing Power from QMI Pricing

One of QMI's most valuable applications is inferring local purchasing power—the ability of residents to afford homes and, by extension, support retail spending. While not a direct measure, QMI pricing provides actionable proxies when analyzed thoughtfully. Here's how to extrapolate it:

1. **Benchmark Against Local Medians:** Compare QMI prices to regional averages. If QMI homes in a state like Florida (where median new home prices hovered around \$420,000 in early 2026) are priced at or below this and selling quickly, it suggests buyers have solid purchasing power. Slow sales at discounted prices, however, might indicate affordability strains, signaling caution for retail investments reliant on discretionary spending.
2. **Incentive Analysis:** Builders use incentives (e.g., closing cost credits) to move QMI inventory. Minimal incentives in a high-price area imply strong purchasing power, as buyers don't need much coaxing. Data from early 2026 shows builders offering an average of \$20,000-\$30,000 in incentives nationally, but in hot markets like Texas suburbs, this drops to under \$10,000—pointing to affluent buyers.
3. **Price Trends and Turnover Rates:** Rising QMI prices with high turnover reflect income growth and confidence. For instance, a 5-10% year-over-year price increase in QMI listings, coupled with low inventory (under 3 months' supply), indicates residents with disposable income for retail. This extrapolation assumes a correlation: Homebuyers committing to \$400,000+ purchases likely have budgets for everyday retail, enhancing value for nearby single tenant properties.

4. **Integration with Broader Metrics:** Pair QMI data with quick-access sources like Bureau of Labor Statistics wage reports (updated monthly) for a fuller picture. If QMI prices outpace wage growth by less than 2:1, purchasing power is resilient; ratios exceeding this might flag overextension.

By focusing on these elements, investors can gauge not just current demand but future stability. Near new home communities, this translates to higher retail occupancy rates and rents, as incoming residents—often with above-average incomes—drive economic uplift.

## Leveraging QMI for Single Tenant Retail and New Home Communities

Single tenant retail shines in stable, growing areas, offering predictable NNN leases with minimal management. Proximity to new home communities amplifies this: As QMI data reveals, these areas attract families and professionals, increasing foot traffic by 15-25% per industry benchmarks. For example, a pharmacy near a Florida QMI hotspot could see sustained demand from new homeowners settling in.

Our platform empowers this by providing daily QMI updates, enabling users to overlay data on retail listings. Investors spotting low QMI inventory in expanding states can prioritize sites there, confident in the market's vibrancy.

In summary, ditching dated Census reliance for QMI's real-time insights revolutionizes retail site selection. It's not just data—it's a strategic edge for building resilient portfolios amid uncertainty.

[Landfinder.AI/Landchecks](#) new Single Tenant Retail tool called RetailSageAI allows users to not only perform an AI generated analysis of a submarket and Single Tenant Retail Brand by corner situs, it provides insight into current land listings and Quick Move In (QMI) homes/Rooftops which drive future retail. Visit RetailSage or contact Chris Worley ([chrisw@landfinder.ai](mailto:chrisw@landfinder.ai)).