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**METROPLAN RELEASES 2017 ECONOMIC REVIEW AND OUTLOOK
The Changing Face of Retail**

LITTLE ROCK, AR, January 3, 2018 — Metroplan announces the release of the *2017 Economic Review and Outlook*, chronicling economic trends for the Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA).

This edition of the *Metrotrends Economic Review and Outlook* takes a look at **the changing face of retail** in Central Arkansas.

E-commerce is altering assumptions about how goods and services are bought, delivered, and even how they are taxed. With local governments depending on sales tax revenues, these changes are matters of vital local importance. Empty storefronts could multiply in coming years. E-commerce may account for one-sixth of all U.S. retail sales by 2021.

There will be some job loss due to the growth of e-commerce, but new jobs are emerging too, mainly in computer fields, warehousing and courier/delivery services.

This issue also examines the Central Arkansas economy:

- Local retailing may be over-built, and a down-shift could be imminent.
- Retail accounts for the majority of commercial land use - 57 percent in Pulaski County.
- The Little Rock metro area remains in a pattern of slow economic and population growth, with low unemployment.
- Demand is strong for highly-skilled workers, and for unskilled workers willing to accept low wages, but there is a lack of jobs in the middle range of pay and skill.
- Areas of local strength have included education, health and social services, and trade.
- In early 2017, the total number of new units starting construction in the Little Rock region jumped to its highest level in seven years, especially multi-family construction.
- The average value of a new home continued increasing with a median of \$190,099 in 2016, the highest yet recorded. The size of newly-built units also climbed in 2016 to a median of 2,775 square feet.
- Other topics include:
 - A look at local retailers Splashwear Aquatics, CocoaBelle Chocolates, and McClain & Co.
 - Cyber-Security: An Update
 - Economic Outlook 2017

Read the full publication by visiting:

<http://metroplan.org/sites/default/files/media/publications/2017-EconomicReview.pdf>

Metroplan publishes *Metrotrends* twice yearly. The spring/summer edition is the *Demographic Review and Outlook*; the fall/winter edition is the *Economic Review and Outlook*. All articles, tables and figures are available for republishing with credit. This issue is available as a PDF or paper copy from Metroplan.

Metroplan is the federally designated metropolitan planning organization for the four-county region of Faulkner, Lonoke, Pulaski and Saline counties. It is a voluntary association of local governments that has operated since 1955.

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