

METRO TRENDS

Economic Review and Outlook

WATER IN CENTRAL ARKANSAS

DECEMBER 2022



- A Good Kind of Economic Instability
- The Central Arkansas Water Advantage
- Engineered Timber
- Central Arkansas As a Logistics Hub
- Housing Construction Veers Down
- Construction Investment in 2021
- A Shifting Housing Outlook
- Economic Outlook 2022–2023
- Statistical Supplement



METROPLAN

SMART PLANNING MAKES SMART PLACES.

On the Cover

The cover image depicts the spillway at Lake Winona, located in the Ouachita National Forest in northern Saline County. The lake can provide up to 24 million gallons of water daily (MGD) for Central Arkansas Water, the region's largest water utility. Lake Winona was developed in the 1930s by the City of Little Rock. Lake Maumelle, developed in the 1950s, can provide up to 133 MGD. The region's water supply remains abundant, clean, and inexpensive thanks in part to long-range planning performed nearly a century ago.

Cover photos: [istockphoto.com](https://www.istockphoto.com)

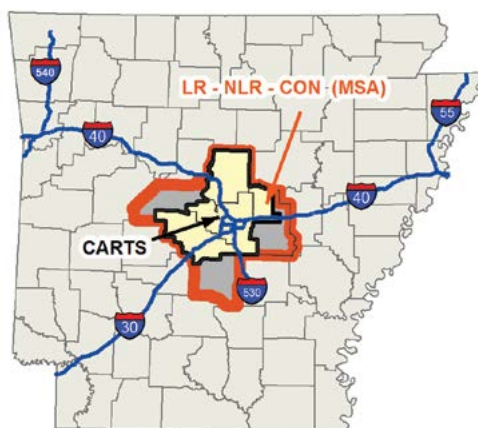
About Metroplan

Metroplan is a voluntary association of local governments that has operated by interlocal agreement since 1955. Originally formed as the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission of Pulaski County, Metroplan now has members in five counties of the six-county metro area. Metroplan is the designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) under Title 23 of the United States Code.

Metroplan serves as the regional voice on issues affecting Central Arkansas, develops transportation plans required by federal law, convenes stakeholders to deal with common issues, and provides information and staff resources to our member local governments, the business community, and the public. As part of that mission, 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*.

About CARTS

The Central Arkansas Regional Transportation Study, or CARTS, is the cooperative effort by the participating communities, transportation providers and many other interested parties to develop a long-range transportation plan for the metropolitan area.



Metroplan's *Economic Review and Outlook* is an annual chronicle providing economic data and insight for the Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway MSA.

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Lynn Bell, graphics, layout, and editing

Photographs by Lynn Bell and Jonathan Lupton except where noted.

Acknowledgments

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This notice is available upon request from the Title VI/ADA/504 Coordinator in large print, audiotape or braille.

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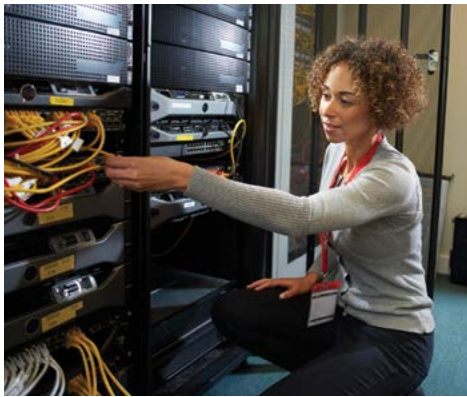
A GOOD KIND OF ECONOMIC INSTABILITY

Little Rock MSA Jobs, January 2015–July 2022

In July of 2022 the Little Rock regional job total reached 369,300, finally exceeding its pre-Covid peak of 366,800 in January 2020. The region's monthly employment was up 2.7 percent year-over-year, compared with about 1.1 percent during the regional slow-growth 2015–2019 period. There is a positive flux in the regional economy, with several industry sectors showing signs of qualitative change.

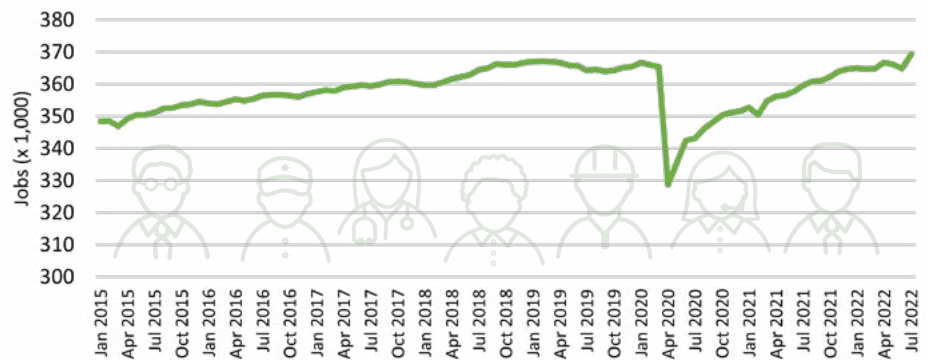


The Central Arkansas region has been caught up in the large economic shift toward warehousing, transportation and logistics that began with the Covid-19 pandemic. Photo: istockphoto.com.



The regional Information sector has levelled out after years of decline. Photo: istockphoto.com.

Little Rock MSA Total Jobs

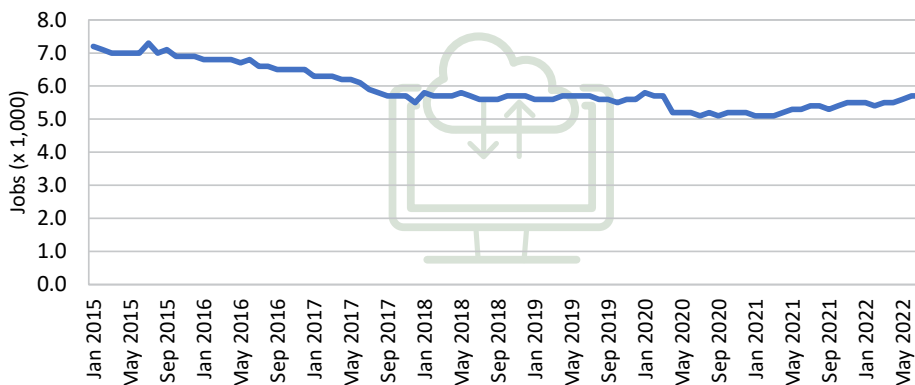


Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Seasonally adjusted.

The chart below depicts recent changes in the region's diminished Information sector. This includes telecommunications, media broadcasting, print media, libraries, and similar fields. A decade ago this sector had over 9,000 jobs, mainly in telecom. By 2021 it had slumped to

barely 5,000 jobs, and the relentless job loss dragged on the regional economy throughout the 2010–2020 decade. Lately it has ticked up a bit toward 6,000. The economic undertow that started in 2008 (when Verizon bought out Alltel) is finally over.

Little Rock MSA Jobs in Information January 2015 through July 2022



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Not seasonally adjusted.

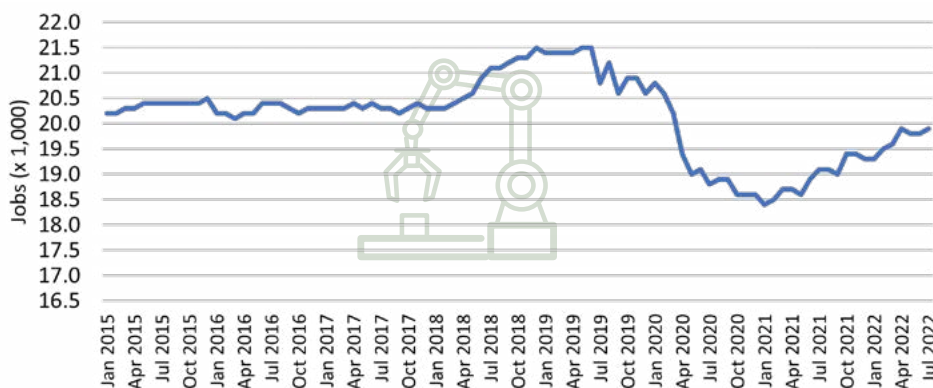
There is a positive flux in the regional economy, with several industry sectors showing signs of qualitative change.

Manufacturing

The region's manufacturing sector was slowly gaining jobs in the 2015–2020 period, peaking around 21,000 in 2019. The Covid recession of 2020 hit local manufacturing hard. Around this time the Keystone XL pipeline cancellation dealt a blow to Welspun, the regional pipe manufacturing powerhouse.¹ LM Windpower also pulled up stakes and quietly left.

Since early 2021 manufacturing has been gaining ground at a faster pace (4 to 6 percent year-over-year) than the previous 2015–2020 period. Among these gains Welspun is ramping back up, Delta Plastics is expanding, and the region seems to be carving out a promising future in the “green” engineered wood sector.

Jobs in Manufacturing



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Not seasonally adjusted.

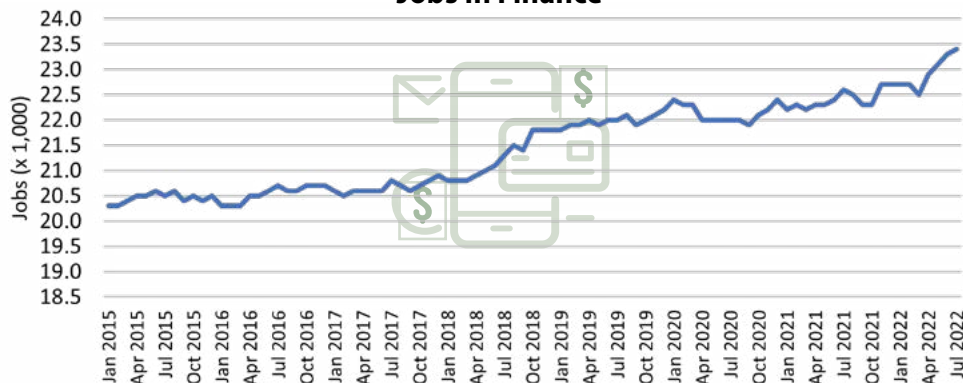
Finance

The region's finance sector has been gaining ground for several years. Recent past editions of this report help explain how the region's innovative fintech sector is playing a role in this growth.² Little Rock has a tradition of banking and investment acumen.



In recent years a large share of the region's numerous banking jobs have moved toward the suburbs.

Jobs in Finance



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Not seasonally adjusted.

¹. For deeper insight on Welspun and the regional steel industry, see December 2018 issue at <http://www.metroplan.org>.

². See December 2019 and July 2021 editions.

Logistics

The final chart shows the most dramatic recent change in the regional economy. Two sectors, Wholesale Trade and especially Transportation and Warehousing, have seen major changes in the past two years. It began in late 2020, when Amazon announced plans to build major warehouses in the Little Rock Port and eastern North Little Rock. In late summer of 2021 these new facilities began jump-starting the regional jobs picture. In statistical terms, most of the new jobs fell within the Transportation and Warehousing sector. As you can see, this sector climbed from about 16,000 jobs in early 2021 to over 20,000 by November of 2021—a gain of over 4,000. The region's Wholesale Trade sector also started seeing gains, rising from around 15,000 after the Covid slump to 17,500 by July of 2022.

By comparison, U.S. wholesale trade jobs ticked slightly downward over the same period. You can

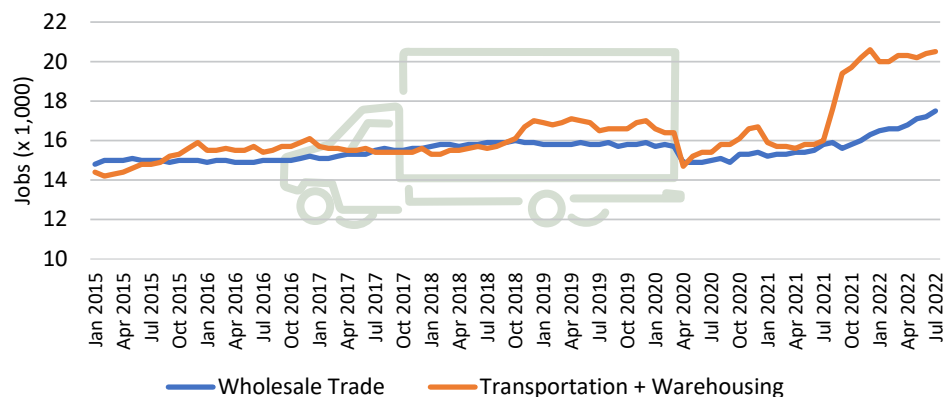
find further insights into the region's latest success in warehousing and logistics on page seven.

The remainder of this issue will focus on the rising tide of regional economic development, which is lifting boats in several areas. Behind these advantages the region holds another edge: high-quality water, and a water supply that looks secure well into the future. **M**



The new Amazon fulfillment center in the Little Rock Port added about 3,000 jobs to the local economy.

Wholesale Trade and Transportation + Warehousing



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Not seasonally adjusted.



This construction along U.S. 70 in eastern North Little Rock will soon be a new Lowe's distribution facility.



The Little Rock Port Authority continues to expand multi-modal freight capacity and capabilities. The direct rail/truck to barge conveyor system funded by an FY2016 TIGER grant is the latest system to be put to use. Photo credit: Little Rock Port Authority.

THE CENTRAL ARKANSAS WATER ADVANTAGE

At first glance, Arkansas might seem an unlikely area to have a water advantage. The state is landlocked, located near the center of the North American continent. While the state is green and forested, higher rainfall averages can be found to the south and east. Nonetheless, the state's central region has an abundant supply of high-quality water.

The region's largest water utility is Central Arkansas Water, providing water for Little Rock and North Little Rock, as well as Sherwood, Maumelle, Bryant, and other cities. There are several other major water systems in the region, as shown in the table on page six.

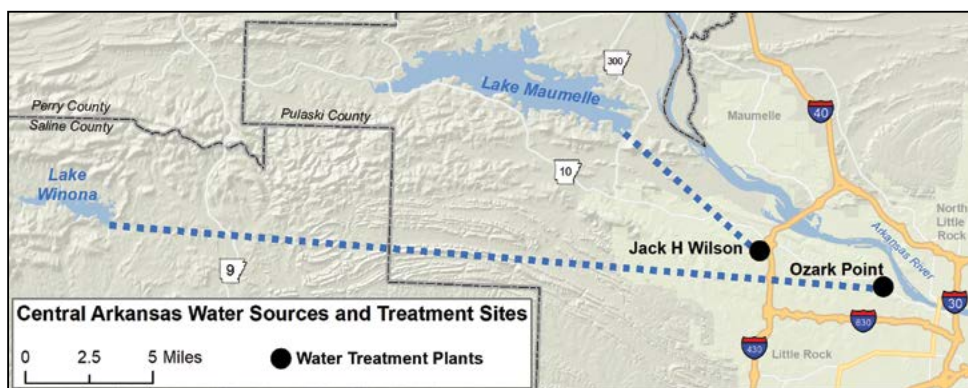
For insight into the region's water supply we talked with Tad Bohannon, Chief Executive Officer for Central Arkansas Water. In broadest terms, Tad says the region's water advantage comes from its location, downstream from the Ouachita Mountains and the Ozark Plateau. Both of these elevated regions are thinly populated—mostly National Forest—with no major sources of industrial or residential contaminants. Central Arkansas Water has never found detectable levels of PFAS¹ in its water, for example. The region benefits from some thoughtful long-term planning done by the City of Little Rock. In the 1930s, the city built Lake Winona in the Ouachita National Forest in northern Saline County. Then, in the 1950s, the Little Rock Municipal Water Works Commission developed Lake



CAW's Ozark Point water treatment facility processes water from Lake Winona. Photo credit: Central Arkansas Water (CAW).

Maumelle in Pulaski County just west of Little Rock. These two lakes, and the treatment facilities that serve them, provide a potential supply of 157 MGD (million gallons daily), 20 percent above peak demand.

Other water utilities in the area hold similar advantages. The water for the Lonoke-White Water Authority comes from Greers Ferry Lake, while Conway gets its water from Brewer Lake in Conway County. In most cases the water also comes from elevated and mostly rural land to the region's west, with low costs and water quality above U.S. averages.



The map above shows, in general terms, the route waters take from Lakes Winona and Maumelle to CAW treatment facilities.

¹PFAS stands for "Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances," a type of water-resistant chemical commonly found in Teflon and other water-resistant materials, now known to be harmful to humans and animals.

"Maintaining public confidence is the holy grail of water supply."

—Tad Bohannon,
CAW CEO

Central Arkansas Water Average/Peak Yearly Production

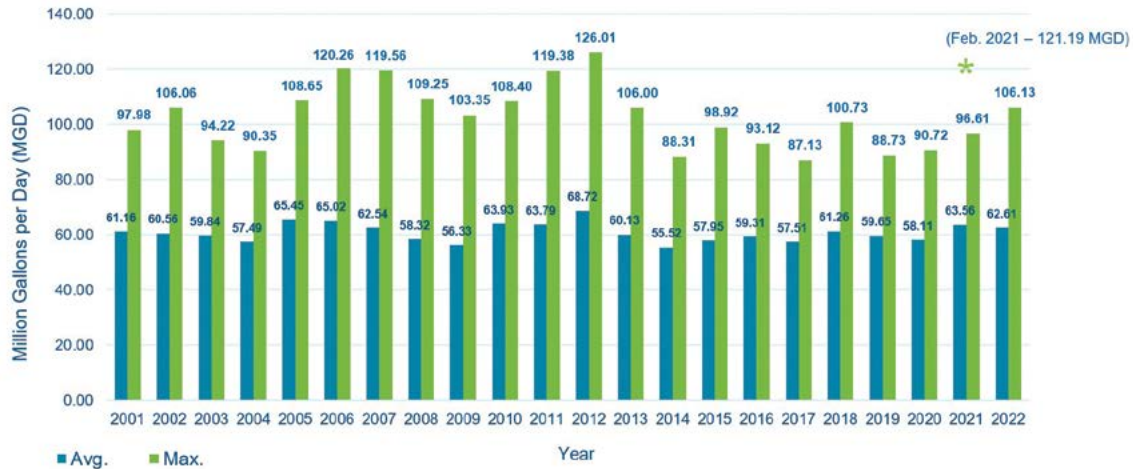


Chart courtesy of Central Arkansas Water.

Residential Water Bills

Rates in Effect January 2022

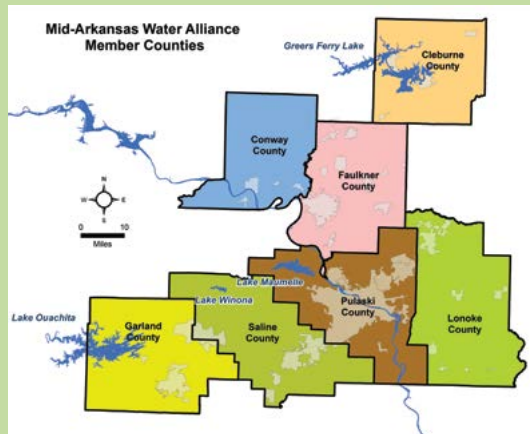
	LOCATION	COMPANY	5 CCF	10 CCF	15 CCF
1	Orlando, FL	Orlando Utilities Commission	\$12.94	\$17.64	\$24.56
2	Phoenix, AZ	City of Phoenix	\$7.74	\$20.48	\$42.76
3	Little Rock, AR	Central Arkansas Water	\$14.69	\$23.24	\$31.79
4	Memphis, TN	Memphis Light, Gas and Water Division	\$11.97	\$23.93	\$35.90
5	Huntsville, AL	Huntsville Utilities	\$17.60	\$24.29	\$31.43
6	Salt Lake City, UT	Salt Lake City Public Utilities	\$17.43	\$24.83	\$32.23
7	Dallas, TX	Dallas Water Utilities	\$13.06	\$25.39	\$44.42
8	Jacksonville, FL	JEA	\$17.08	\$25.54	\$36.98
9	St. Louis, MO	City of St. Louis Water Division	\$16.80	\$25.65	\$34.50
10	Milwaukee, WI	City of Milwaukee	\$16.87	\$27.57	\$38.27

CCF stands for "centum cubic feet," or 100 cubic feet. Utilities typically charge less for smaller amounts, like under 5 CCF, and charge higher rates for larger-scale water use. Source: Central Arkansas Water.

The Long-Term Water Future

The Central Arkansas region's water supply is in good shape at present. Current water demand is well within CAW's capacities, probably as far out as 2100. The region is not immune, however, to risks from climate change. Rising temperatures will yield greater evaporation rates, and possibly periods of prolonged drought.

Fortunately, since 2003 the major water utilities have banded together



The Mid-Arkansas Water Alliance (MAWA) works to guarantee a clean, affordable water supply for water utilities across six counties.

for long-term planning, in an organization known as MAWA (Mid-Arkansas Water Alliance). With twenty-seven water utilities in seven counties, MAWA has managed to reserve rights to major water resources in Greers Ferry Lake and Lake Ouachita. While the utilities retain their independence, their ability to work together with long-range planning helps guarantee water security into the next century.

Conway's Water

Conway Corporation gets its water from James H. Brewer Lake in Conway County. It is interconnected with other local water systems, allowing for exchange of water during emergencies. Conway Corp provided wholesale water to a nearby community when water mains burst during Winter Storm Uri, in February of 2021. The water supply from Brewer Lake is adequate at present, but Conway may need additional water looking toward 2050. Conway Corp has an allocation from Greers Ferry Lake, which should provide for future needs. It remains open to working with and possibly purchasing water from other utilities such as Central Arkansas Water.



Conway's water comes from Brewer Lake, located northeast of Morrilton in Conway County. Photo credit: Conway Corp.

Benton's Water

In addition to providing water for Benton residents, the Benton Water Utility sells wholesale water to the Salem Water Association, the Southwest Water Association, and the City of Bauxite. Benton's long-term water future is relatively assured, because wholesale customers will likely transfer to Central Arkansas Water over the long run, which will free up capacity. In addition, Central Arkansas Water provides emergency

capacity since water could be transferred to Benton from Central Arkansas Water via the Salem Water Users Public Water Authority. The region's other major water utilities are listed in the table below. **M**

Central Arkansas Water Utilities

Water Utility	Areas Served Entirely	Areas Served Partially	Water Source(s)
Central Arkansas Water	Bryant Little Rock North Little Rock Maumelle Shannon Hills Sherwood Wrightsville	Alexander Cabot Benton Jacksonville Salem Sardis	Lake Maumelle, Lake Winona
Lonoke White Public Water Authority	Ward Austin		Greers Ferry Lake
Community Water System	Mayflower Vilonia Greenbrier		Greers Ferry Lake
North Garland County Regional Water District	Hot Springs Village		Lake Ouachita
Benton Utilities	Benton	Salem	Lake Norrell, Saline River, Chenault Reservoir
Conway Corporation	Conway		Brewer Lake

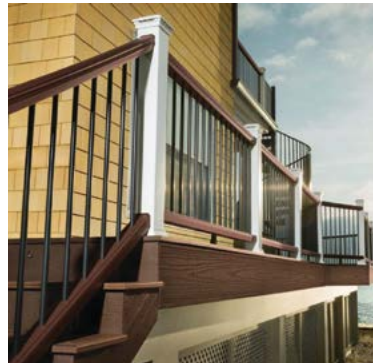


ENGINEERED TIMBER

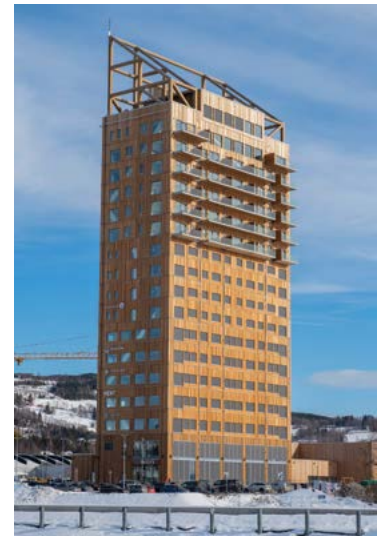
The making of steel and concrete yields heavy carbon emissions. For this reason, there is growing interest today in using wood for major construction projects. Wood products can be made into “engineered timber,” wood strong enough to replace steel for several uses, including frames for large structures. It requires industrial processing to make wood hard enough, but it takes less carbon to make wood products. Wood products also contain carbon and can sequester it for centuries. In a world increasingly concerned about CO₂ levels, with growing corporate interest in LEED certification for new buildings, structural wood could have a big future.

Central Arkansas today hosts two new firms that fabricate so-called “engineered timber” for construction. Structurlam in Conway makes structural wood for the new Walmart headquarters in Bentonville, Arkansas. As the demand for engineered timber grows, it may produce for other uses.

During 2022, the Trex firm announced it would locate a sizeable new facility in the Little Rock Port. Trex makes construction products based on a mixture of plastic with wood. This opens opportunities in recycled plastic. The region



The Trex firm, soon to begin operating a new factory in the Little Rock Port, combines recycled plastic with timber to make consumer-friendly construction products like those shown here. Photo credit: Trex.com



The Mjostarnet Tower in Norway is, for now, the world's tallest structure built primarily with engineered timber. Larger ones are already in prospect. Photo credit: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mj%C3%B8st%C3%A5rnet>

already has plastics know-how. The innovative local firm Delta Plastics recycles used plastics into trash bags.

The future of engineered timber is uncertain. A lot depends on how cost-competitive it can become with steel. There is no doubt, however, that Central Arkansas has grabbed a niche in the field, and nearby forests hold plenty of wood. **M**

Central Arkansas As a Logistics Hub

In the fall of 2020 the Amazon Corporation began building a fulfillment center in the Little Rock Port, one of the largest construction projects in the region's history. Amazon also built another large facility in eastern North Little Rock. Coming in the middle of a pandemic, and shrouded in secrecy, the corporate behemoth's investment pointed the way for a growing trend in logistics, warehousing and transportation in the region. Today firms like Dollar General and Lowe's are building sizeable warehouses in Central Arkansas.

What is behind this trend? The Little Rock region is central within the country. Nearby large metro areas like Dallas, Memphis and St. Louis are “maxed out” in terms of real estate costs and traffic congestion. The Little Rock region also benefits from having two major rail lines (UP and BNSF),

good water transportation, and a well-located airport with plenty of spare capacity. Since early 2021 the region has gained about 4,000 new jobs in this sector, with more in prospect.



Heavy truck traffic at the Little Rock Port hints at the region's growing role as a hub for logistics and transportation.

HOUSING CONSTRUCTION VEERS DOWN



The pace of housing construction remained robust in the Little Rock region during the first half of 2022, with 980 new single-family and 576 multi-family units under construction. Most cities saw fewer permits

compared with the first half of 2021 but Benton and North Little Rock saw an increase. Jacksonville also saw an uptick in permits, mainly due to 31 new homes permitted in The Meadows during the month of June.

Multi-family construction was almost entirely in Little Rock, with 567 new units. These included 96 new units on Dover Drive in central west Little Rock, 144 units on Chenal Valley Drive, over 300 new units in Riverdale, and 84 units on Shackleford Road. Bryant, North Little Rock and Conway saw only minor construction of duplex units.

Single-family housing is sensitive to interest rates, and early statistics suggest a slowdown in the pace of new single-family construction. The chart depicting the local single-family permit trend since 2018 shows a sharp drop-off for the region in August of 2022. U.S. figures also indicate a downward trend through July, but August figures are not yet available. It is unwise to put too much emphasis on data from a single month, but as interest rates continue rising single-family housing construction will feel the pinch.

Half Year (January–June) Housing Unit Permits 2019–2022

Single-Family

	2019	2020	2021	2022
Benton	51	111	132	197
Bryant	57	58	70	35
Cabot	47	40	55	45
Conway	158	121	160	158
Hot Sprgs Vill	28	32	65	53
Jacksonville	29	34	15	48
Little Rock	205	139	268	212
Maumelle	28	36	44	41
N Little Rock	55	66	109	121
Sherwood	98	94	78	70

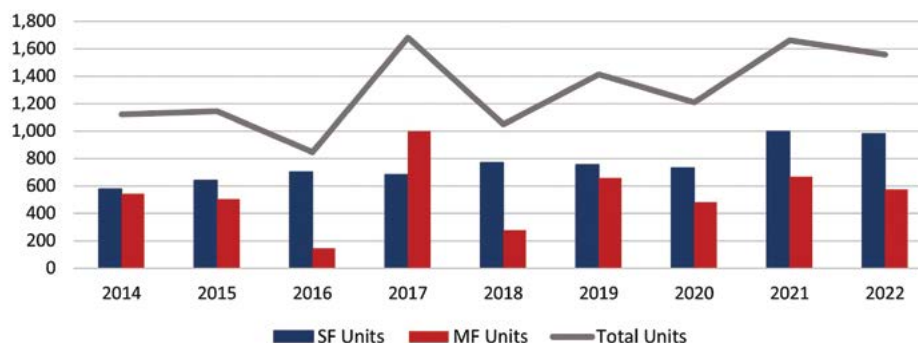
Multi-Family

	2019	2020	2021	2022
Benton	0	0	0	0
Bryant	0	0	12	2
Cabot	6	0	0	0
Conway	176	169	184	2
Hot Sprgs Vill	0	0	0	0
Jacksonville	66	0	0	0
Little Rock	410	293	457	567
Maumelle	0	0	0	0
N Little Rock	0	19	15	5
Sherwood	0	0	0	0

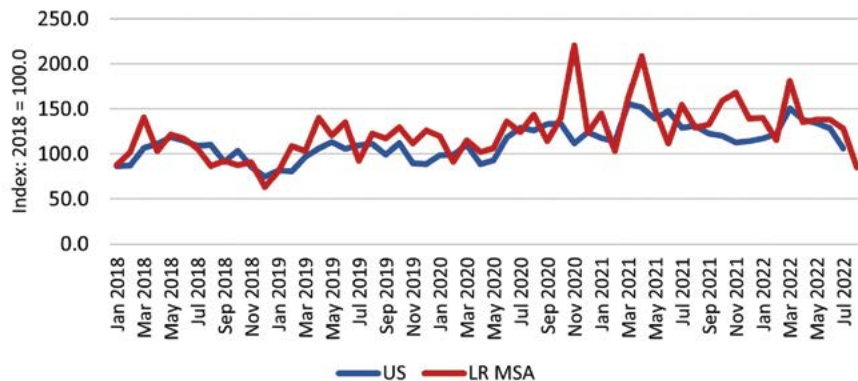
Regional Totals

	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total SF	728	699	931	927
Total MF	658	481	668	576
Grand Total	1,386	1,180	1,599	1,503

LR-NLR-Conway Housing Unit Permits First Six Months of Each Year 2014–2022



Single-Family New Unit Permit Trend 2018–2022



While a few homes are still being built, the volume of construction activity is slowing.

CONSTRUCTION INVESTMENT IN 2021

The year 2021 saw a total of \$1.2 billion in construction investment in the region. Central Arkansas invested \$655 million into residential construction. Adjusted for inflation, this represents the region's greatest housing investment total since 2007. The largest share, \$504 million or 77 percent of this total was in single-family housing. In 2021 the median value of new single-family homes set a new record at \$231,436. This blew past the previous year's record amount of \$198,711 by 16 percent. In sum, housing demand was strong in 2021, fed by low interest rates. And despite the rise in costs,

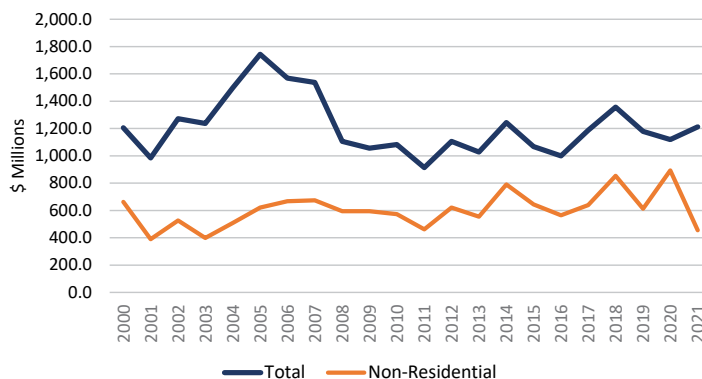
local housing retains an affordability advantage compared with most other U.S. metro areas.¹

Nonresidential construction was \$454.9 million in 2021, somewhat below average. However, much of the construction activity recorded for the year 2020 through building permits was still ongoing through 2021, including two sizeable Amazon warehouses in Little Rock and North Little Rock, which were completed in 2022.



The new Hampton Astoria provides upscale multi-family housing in western Little Rock.

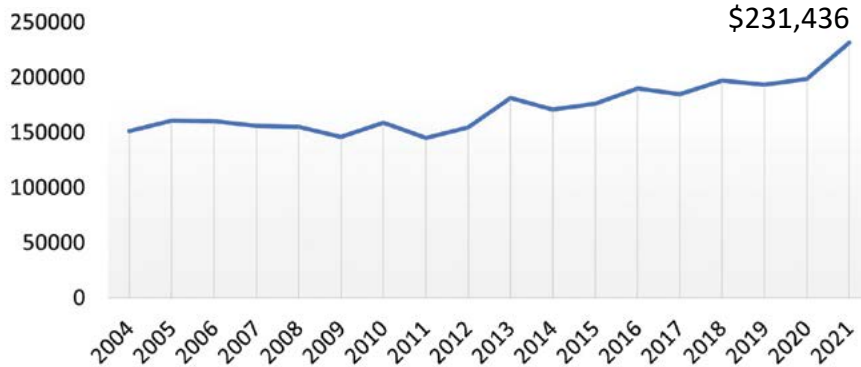
Little Rock MSA Construction Value 2000–2021 (Inflation-adjusted)



Central Arkansas invested \$655 million into residential construction... this represents the region's greatest housing investment total since 2007.

¹ See December 2021 edition of this newsletter at <http://www.metroplan.org>.

**Little Rock MSA Median New House Value
2004–2021 (Nominal \$)**



Rising interest rates mean today's home buyer must pay more to get less. Housing markets are slowing in response. Photo: istockphoto.com

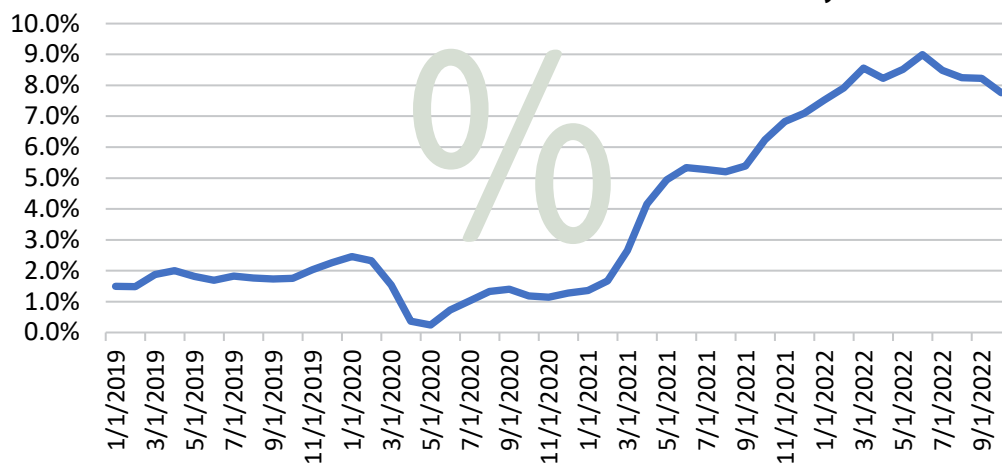
A SHIFTING HOUSING OUTLOOK

From the mid-1980s until early 2021, U.S. inflation ran consistently below 4 percent, and often under 3 percent. During the Covid-19 crisis in the spring of 2020, inflation went nearly negative. In early 2021, inflation began climbing, peaking (so far) at 9 percent in June of 2022. The rise in inflation probably owes to stimulative U.S. fiscal policy that began with large tax cuts in 2017 and accelerated with further spending increases in 2020 and 2021. Exceptionally low interest rates from March 2020 through March of 2022 contributed. Economic disruptions during the pandemic and shortages, especially with labor, seem to have boosted the inflationary trend.

As the chart of long-term rates shows, the Federal Reserve's prime rate peaked as high as 21.5 percent in late 1980, but rates generally trended downward through succeeding decades. Following the Great Recession during the 2010s, interest rates ran at historic lows. The Federal Reserve raised them a bit late in the decade, before dropping the prime rate to a nadir of 3.25 percent during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Super-low interest rates, plus renewed housing demand during the Covid-19 pandemic, yielded a housing construction surge. In 2021, Central Arkansas housing starts peaked at 1,908, the region's highest level since 2007. Prices rose too, but the region retained a significant cost advantage over the national average.

U.S. Year-Over-Year Rate of Inflation (Monthly)



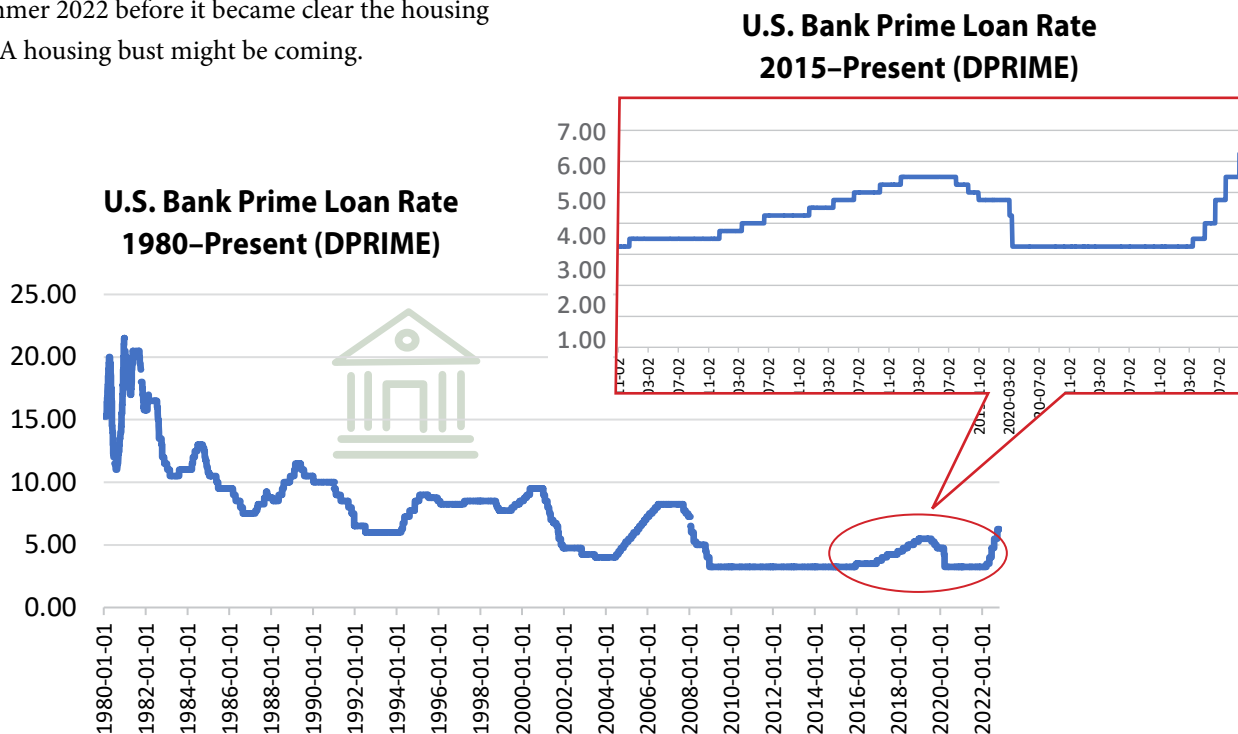
Source: Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, CPI for all urban consumers.

The Federal Reserve hesitated to raise interest rates until March of 2022, when it finally recognized surging inflation was more than a temporary blip. Since that time interest rates have been rising quickly. Nobody knows how high—or how long—they will rise.

Housing construction in Central Arkansas sagged a little after rates began rising, but it was late summer 2022 before it became clear the housing boom is over. A housing bust might be coming.

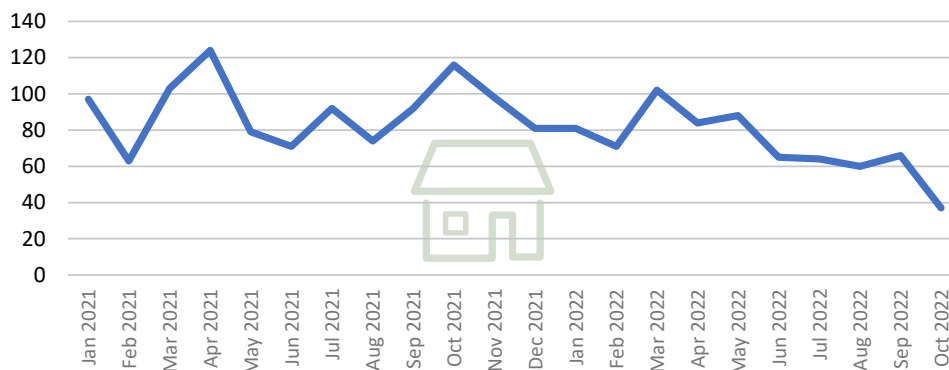


The Central Arkansas region benefits from exceptionally affordable housing. This may help builders and buyers a bit. It is also likely that, after rising for several years, housing prices and values will readjust downward. Similar adjustments occurred when interest rates hit record highs in the early 1980s.¹ Record levels of housing construction during 2021 will not be repeated anytime soon.



Source: Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. Bank Prime Loan Rate, percent, daily. Not seasonally adjusted.

New Single-Family Housing Unit Permits 2021-2022 (Big Three* Cities)



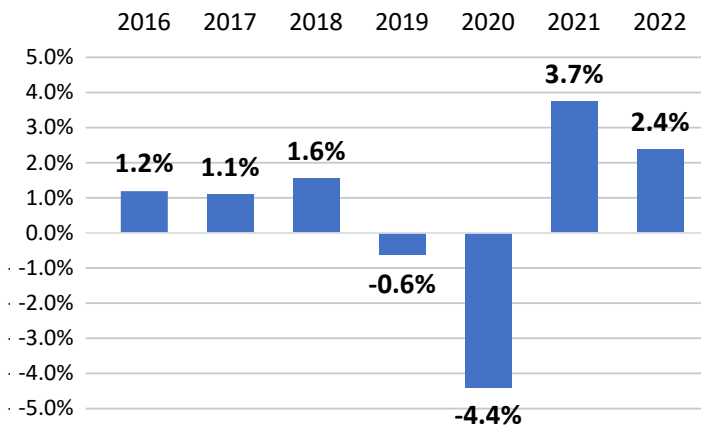
*Little Rock, North Little Rock, and Conway.

¹ After adjusting for inflation, which peaked around 14 percent from February through June, 1980.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK 2022–2023

The U.S. economy is seeing odd times moving into the post-Covid era. Unemployment remains low but has begun to climb, while interest rates are rising and stocks are sagging. As the chart below shows, the Central Arkansas region has shown faster job growth in the past two years than during the pre-Covid period. There are signs of structural economic change underway.

Little Rock MSA Job Growth 2016–2022



Figures above represent year-over-year job growth in month of September.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Little Rock's Venture Center, a technology incubator with an emphasis in fintech, has helped propel local entrepreneurship. Local tech startups have been successful enough that law firms have moved into the Little Rock Technology Park to help with patenting and technology rights. The region's biotech sector deals with similar legal needs, giving potential for cooperation. At the same time, local universities know the tech world moves faster than traditional academic programs and are working to integrate education with the pace of

The region may be competitive for solar cell and microchip manufacturers, which require large volumes of high-quality water.



Molex is one of several local technology businesses that benefit from low-cost / high-quality water in Central Arkansas.

business change. Since the education sector faces fewer H1B Visa requirements than the business world, it can bring in tech immigrants with know-how about the latest business trends to work with local students, for mutual benefit. The tech migrants can later transition into the business community. This arrangement has benefits for the region's cyber-security niche.

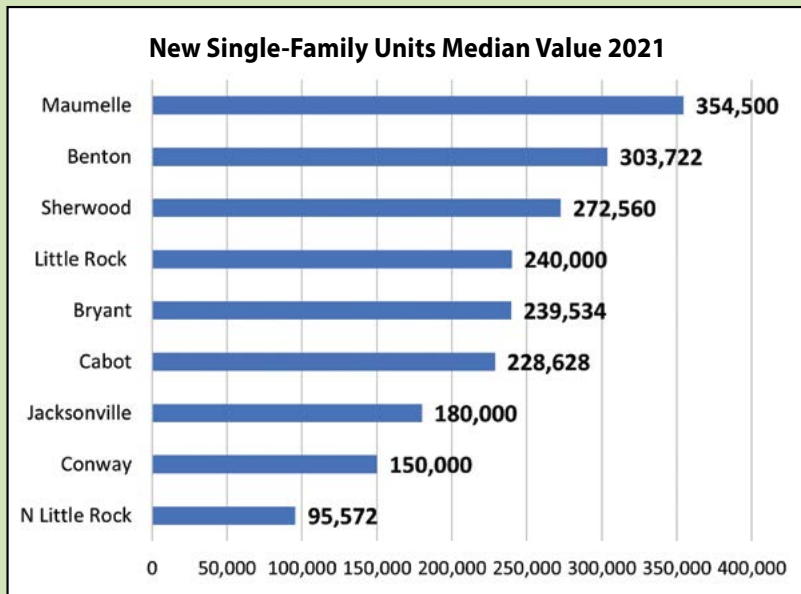
At the same time, the local manufacturing sector shows signs of promise. The region is working toward developing two potential industrial "super sites," in the Little Rock Port and on I-40 in eastern North Little Rock. As noted on page 7, Central Arkansas is becoming a logistics hub. It is also becoming a center in the innovative new field of engineered timber.

This edition emphasized the key local advantage of abundant and inexpensive water, literally some of the world's best. Industrial site developers are astonished at low local water rates. Central Arkansas executive director Tad Bohannon told us he is frequently asked "can you confirm that?" when site developers learn of water rates. The water is top-quality, requiring less pre-industrial treatment for specialty uses. This makes Central Arkansas highly competitive for water-dependent businesses like food processing. The region may be competitive for solar cell and microchip manufacturers, which require large volumes of high-quality water.¹

In stressful economic times there are no assurances. But a mix of promising local developments suggests the region may be hitting a new stride, across several economic sectors at once.

¹ The microchip market has recently downshifted, but over a longer horizon water supply matters. See "Water's Critical Role in Semiconductor Manufacturing," Industry Today, January 18, 2022.

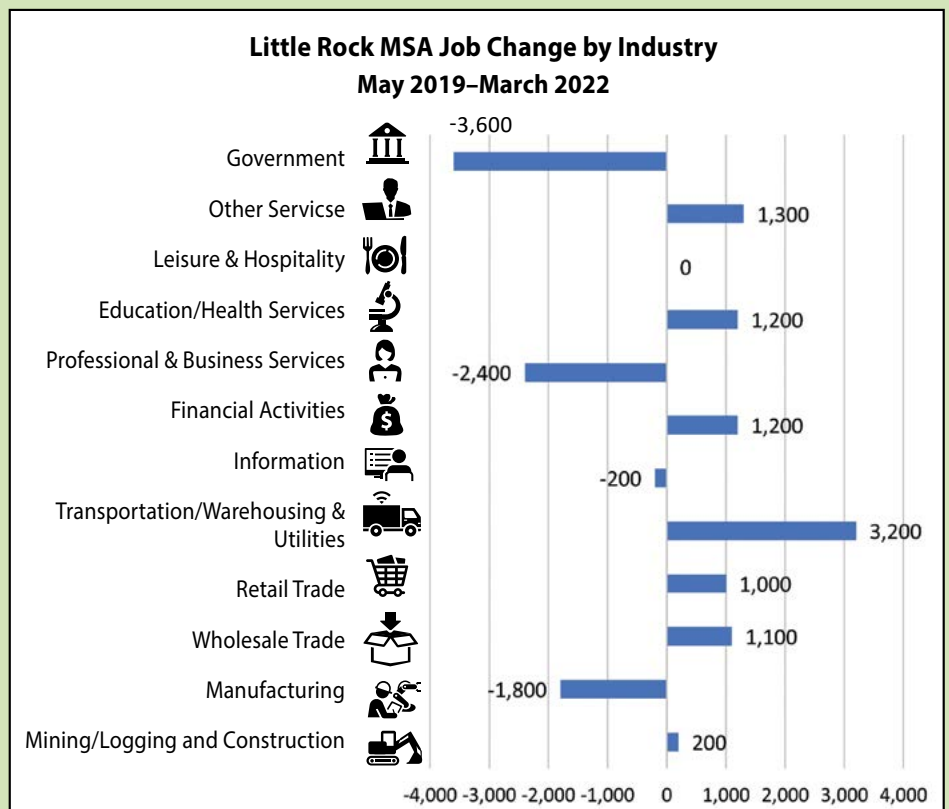
STATISTICAL SUPPLEMENT—NOVEMBER, 2022



The chart at left shows median value for new single-family housing units in 2021, based on building permits. While Maumelle has held top place for a while, Benton's new homes are moving upscale at over \$300,000, and Sherwood has also climbed compared with previous years. North Little Rock built the region's most affordable new single-family units, many of them in the Baucum area east of I-440.

Note, however, that these figures come from building permits. They do not tell us the final selling value of homes and the lots they occupy.

The chart at right shows job change by industry from March of 2019 through March of 2022. It thus depicts regional economic changes over the Covid-19 period. Note that the biggest job loss was in the government sector. Based on national trends, this is probably a byproduct of changing economic conditions. Government jobs offer less competitive wages, and in the post-Covid labor shortage workers have flocked to better-paying sectors.



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