

## **Year in Review: National retailers notice NOLA resurgence New Orleans City Business - Online**

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New Orleans area retailers reported fits and starts of consumer confidence this year as shoppers kept an eye on sputtering job growth and rising food prices.

Still, overall sales in the metro area were on the rise in 2011.

After their sales tax revenues slid backward in 2010, Jefferson and St. Tammany parishes reported receipts were up 6.4 percent and 5.7 percent, respectively.

Orleans Parish sales tax revenues grew 5.4 percent this year, notable after the New Orleans Saints' Super Bowl win buoyed local consumers in 2010.

Consumers started easing back into large-ticket purchases toward the end of 2011. After a strong October, new car and truck sales statewide were up 20 percent each in November, according to the Louisiana Automobile Dealers

Association.

Chain retailers appeared to be shaking off recession jitters as well. In July, Target completed construction and opened the doors to its 138,000-square-foot store at The Esplanade in Kenner. World of Décor, an Orlando, Fla.-based furniture chain, will take over the former Dillard's Men anchor location at the mall in 2012.

This summer, **Stirling Properties** unveiled plans for Mid-City Market, a \$35 million retail development at the former Bohn Ford and Harry's Ace Hardware buildings on North Carrollton Avenue, and a 136,000-square-foot Sam's Club location at its River Chase development in Covington.

Costco Wholesale Corp. is mulling plans for a 145,000-square foot warehouse store at the intersection of Carrollton Avenue and Interstate 10, and Wal-Mart Stores Inc. announced earlier this month it will build a Supercenter at I-10 and Bullard Avenue, marking the most significant retail venture in eastern New Orleans since Hurricane Katrina.

Local merchants along Magazine Street saw sales dip slightly as repaving work blocked off sections of the six-mile road for much of the year.

Some area merchants found creative ways to advertise and cut costs. This year saw the rise in popularity of group discounting websites and low-cost mobile payment systems that allow retailers to swipe credit cards on their smart phones.