



The mission of St. Landry Economic Development is to provide leadership in economic and community development that facilitates growth opportunities leading to enhanced prosperity for St. Landry Parish businesses, communities, its citizens and youth.

## **Executive Directors Report**

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## **I - Business Center Update**

We continue to be proactive in holding and promoting planning and education sessions designed to address community, business, property development and education related issues. Later this month we will be hosting a "Leader in Me" presentation on its value to schools; a "Key Legal Issues for Startups" on July 24<sup>th</sup>; a Community Leadership Seminar on July 30<sup>th</sup>, and a Starting and Financing a Small Business" Seminar on July 30<sup>th</sup>.

We have had the following prospective tenants within the past at the Business Center:

FunFlicks, Storage Space-Prospective Tenant

Ekhaya, Youth Project-Prospective Tenant

Children and Family Court Ordered Family Services – Prospective Tenant

Miracle Ear – Prospective Tenant

Judy has also provided direct business assistance to the following small businesses:

Briskett Baskett, Food Truck-Business Development

Irvin J. Kohler, Architect (Energy) (Eunice Satellite Office)

Bertrand Printing (Eunice Satellite Office)

It would appear that we have finally come to an amiable solution with the Office of Community Development as it relates to documentation necessary to satisfy their requirements on total job creation. This has included submitting a new 504 ADA compliance application, a very large application, to satisfy the OCD requirement. The paperwork process is now underway to process the forgiveness of the initial loan. It is still unclear how long this will take since the Office of Community Development has never had to do this before. Judy Meche should be commended for her yeoman's effort on this project!

Effective June 1<sup>st</sup>, we have seven businesses operating in our center, which are:

Relentless Designs – (Office Relocation)

David Joseph Counseling Services

Joie de Vive Counseling

C&C Painting and Pressure Washing

Excellent Drivers Academy

A 24/7 Inspection Services

Boone Speech and Learning Services

## **II – Communications**

The new website development is still in the 4<sup>th</sup> phase of process development and stands at close to 90% completion. We had planned to present a walk thru to the Board at this Board Meeting, but decided to wait until the August meeting in order to allow ample time for the presentation and discussion on progress with the St Landry Young Professionals, as well as the possible committee structures.

Our team has been physically taking the marketing material brochure you recently reviewed to locations around the Parish. Please let us know if any of you have thoughts on appropriate placement locations in your parts of the Parish.

Brandy is continuing to compile data with relation to St. Landry Parish in terms of economic development to begin a complete database of information beneficial to agencies and organizations throughout St. Landry Parish. Ultimately, this data will be assimilated and used as the catalyst for a Parish Economic Performance Index based off of a comparable model used by the Lafayette Economic Development Authority. Developed and Provided Opelousas - St. Landry Chamber of Commerce with literature as well as imaging to be displayed within the 2014 Chamber Resource Guide.

As an early proactive effort for a future community development equestrian development we have brought together a group from Parish Tourism, Opelousas Tourism, Parish Government, and our agency to look at proven PR strategies for a project like this should it prove worthy of moving forward.

- This team has already developed a 'White Paper' as it relates to the P.R. committee, structured for the purpose of promoting the St. Landry Parish Exposition Development.

With some of the big projects, such as the development project for the expo, It is still critically important that you as board members keep up the positive communications and get feedback from leaders across the Parish on priorities that are important to them. Also, if you as board members have sessions or meetings that you would like to see me give an economic development update at we would welcome your assistance in helping to facilitate these presentations.

### **III - Property Development (Large-scale)**

We continue to aggressively work with on planning efforts for large-scale development along the high profile transportation corridors in the parish. We are continuing, along with other key stakeholders and leaders in the Parish, to have working sessions with incentive professionals towards incentive structuring along our major transportation corridors. We also continue to work with numerous large scale development groups to facilitate discussions with significant property owners along the corridor with positive results. We are also getting more inquiries from multiple outside development groups about potential opportunities at various points along the I-49 Corridor.

Work is now well underway by the ULL Architecture Department on a master plan rendition for the Guilbeau Road Corridor. This work is an excellent example of how public and private sectors can come together to move a meaningful effort forward.

The work with the Corps of Engineers on the wetland mitigation work on the property adjacent to the Wal-Mart Distribution Center may now need some more information in order for the permit to be signed off on. We will work through whatever is necessary to make sure this arduous process is addressed as soon as possible. We were just made aware of this on Friday. Previously, we were told by the Corp that permit was just awaiting final signature.

We continue to put significant into prioritizing identified industrial sites for potential partnership development with LED and AEDC. We have now come to a conclusion on the top site and have had initial positive discussions with the owner about moving forward.

We have reevaluated our 422 acres site as part of this process and the consensus by the evaluators is that we should continue with considering the sale of this parcel in the final quarter of 2014 for a potential sale closing in January 2015. Judy has also worked to ensure all of our documentation related to this property and its lease amendments have been signed and bought up to date.

### **IV Projects Update**

**Agra Tech, Kyosan USA** – Discussion's with their CEO continue and while there have been some unanticipated delay's, the news is still positive for this project moving forward, although we still do not have a solid date for the formally moving forward on a pilot line at the facility.

**Project Crush** – We are working with our regional partner in ongoing negotiations with this company and their consulting team based out of Nevada, where they are underway

with the construction of another production facility, which is where their primary focus is right now. We have covered significant ground in these negotiations and anticipate their executive team will soon switch their focus to working towards getting this negotiation completed here in St Landry.

**Project Grip** – This is still a very active project to which our site in the parish is the top contender. Detailed negotiations are taking place now on facility and property ownership. We hope to see progress with these negotiations over the next month and are facilitating connections and information as needed as part of this process.

**Project Cloak** – Although the details of this project continue to be highly confidential, there have been advanced negotiations related to details about a specific site in the parish and an agreement has been reached with the property owner to allow due diligence on behalf of the company to begin. Still, no additional information can be released about the details or exact location of this project at this time. This project may tie directly into other large opportunities that are being vetted for potential in the Parish.

**Project Crude** – This project continues to move forward and will hinge largely on our ability to find ways to expand rail infrastructure. This will not likely be an initial high job creation project, but is important because it could dramatically expand infrastructure capacity for other projects to come in behind it. The timeframe for this project is 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 2014.

**Project Roto** – This is an existing company within the Parish that is looking to branch into a new location to expand their production with a new production process and array of products. There are property offers now in place on this project and the due diligence process is currently ongoing. We should have a conclusion on this project one way or the other by the end of August. This project would be a tremendous win for the Parish with a great company!

#### **Project Expo –**

In the last meeting we agreed on the following action steps:

First we have been working on formalizing the structure of a public private partnership for this project. The basis for this concept is at about 85% drafted at this time

Second, we agreed that with no dirt, there is not project. We are at about 90% complete with the concept of an actual site to place the development on.

Third, we agreed to possibility look at up to 100k if needed to support soft cost efforts for this project. First, the dirt must be secure, but assuming that is a go we

have a solid engineering master plan proposal as a basis in hand and multiple proposals from entities experienced in structuring public/private partnerships.

Fourth, we agreed to look at the formation of a public private advisory committee structure for this project. While it is still a bit premature for the formation of this group multiple positive and productive conversations have taken place over the past month to lay this foundation.

**Project Rip – Cleared for Formal Announcement:** This project is now formally under construction, as well as having temporary operations now underway. The company, Top Timber, will soon be set to employ 12 – 15 full time positions with the potential to grow very quickly if certain international agreements can be established.

**Project Alon – Announced Expansion Project:** The Alon Refinery has recently completed an expansion at their facility to include the building of a rail transfer facility that will allow them more efficiently loading on and off load bulk rail materials to be utilized both in and out of their production facility.

**Project Runway – Announced Recruitment:** A formal announcement was made for this project on Thursday February 20<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 PM at their new construction site just past Beau Chene High School. We conducted a follow-up site visit last week. There is solid progress on the foundation structure, which is the most time consuming portion of their build process. The company still expects construction to be complete by the end of July.

**Project Martin – Announced Expansion:** Bayou State Lumber Company, LLC, formerly known as Acadiana Hardwood, LLC. This company will create 29 permanent new jobs and retain 21. This mill is the only viable employment opportunity for most individuals in the area.

#### **V – Area and Regional Development Items:**

First, as most of you now know, Ms. Lynn Lejeune has assumed the Chamber of Commerce CEO position. We anticipate that she will be a great partner and look forward to a very strong and productive relationship as they seek to work towards new strategic priorities. We continue to foster an active relationship on many important initiatives being addressed by the Chamber.

We also continue to work closely with Parish Tourism to ensure we are aligned on key initiatives through the region. The staff's of both agencies have also been actively collaborating on ideas and concepts for joint marketing and parish promotion. We now have bi-weekly meetings with their leadership and other key partners in the identification

and prioritization of priority projects for the parish that can be promoted by Cornerstone Governmental Affairs in the next session.

Our top 25 employer list here in the parish has been scrubbed for accuracy and we have started the process of physical outreach with all of these employers face to face, with the goal of hitting all of them in 2014.

We continue to have dialogue with economic development professionals from the southwest region on collaboration potential to meet the demands of \$67,000,000,000 in new investment that create 29,264 construction and 20,866 new permanent positions. This is going to put a big strain on our already strained workforce environment in this parish and in this region. It will be imperative that we actively work with existing local employers and training providers to find ways to ensure their ongoing workforce needs are met.

AEDC (Acadiana Economic Development Council) Update:

All the assessors in Acadiana had the opportunity to participate recently in a presentation of the regional GIS Mapping Model that has been done through Fenstermaker. The feedback by the assessors was very positive and we expect to have this product available for public view in the next several weeks.

The board selected Omega Protein, from Evangeline Parish, as the regions 2014 Lantern Award recipient.

Jason Elkoubi with the Lafayette Parish Chamber of Commerce spoke to the board at some length about the Chamber's vision for One Acadiana and all the benefits associated with such an arrangement that would build significant capacity in following areas:

- Marketing of the region
- Key policy issues of the region
- Business and product development for the region

AEDC board members met last week with Stephen Moret and other key state officials to discuss the benefits and challenges in creating a more sound regional structure that would allow Acadiana to better build its development capacities.

## **VI – Community Development in St Landry Parish**

We continue to work with LSU-E on meaningful ways to engage their students in the business community of St Landry Parish and to help to develop their leadership capacity. It is likely that there will be a program established within LSU-E for very select students in the upcoming fall semester; that we as economic development will be taking an active role in contributing.

Our staff met with Patrick Broussard, Regional Representative, Senator Vitter's Congressional Office in Eunice to give him some overview of some key things happening in the Parish.

Our team, along with other key parish partner participated in Buxton Webinar as it relates to "Retail Development for your Community." This has the potential to be a very valuable tool for our local communities in the areas of retail promotion and recruitment.

We are working with Melville and their leaders to find opportunities in further developing their waterfront potential along the Atchafalaya by looking at a boat launch and other possibilities.

Our staff continues to be a regular presence in the Eunice Satellite office on Thursdays. They are continuing community outreach and meeting with interested small business clients that are being referred by the Eunice Economic Development Committee. They are also playing an active role in providing technical assistance where possible to the various sub committees of Eunice Economic Development Committee. Judy is also actively participating in on the Eunice Economic Development-Sub Committee-City of Eunice Master Plan.

All of the staff continues to participate in developing a new project with Steamboat City Association and the Wal-Mart Distribution Center. If successful, this effort could provide a blue print that other communities in the parish could use in helping connect career opportunities for persons in their communities that have some kind of challenge to employment.

We continue to work closely with the Parish President, Parish Tourism and the Chamber of Commerce, to identify priorities that can be worked on by Cornerstone Governmental Affairs in this legislative session. The value of their services was recently highlighted in their ability to help our legislative delegation bring forward priorities that were submitted through capital outlay by Parish Government prior to Cornerstone coming on board. These included an additional hanger at the SLP Airport, lighting



upgrades for the Delta Grand and some other small items. These requests totaled more than 500k now are awaiting placement with the state bond commission.

We are now working with Parish Government to explore planning potential for the Parish by looking at some of the planning initiatives and processes that have been used in Sunset.

We are also working the South Central Planning District to develop resources, tools and education for the communities throughout the Parish.

We continue to work with both private and public sector partners in efforts to proactively engage in infill development within downtown Opelousas. One of the key events happening in the near future is the development of a small park in the parking area just down from Java Square. While small, this park will show real progress on downtown moving forward.

Grants related efforts:

- USDA RBEG Grant; Dollars would be allocated for Digital/Electronic Advertising that could be used for an electronic sign upgrade for the front of the Business Center. This application will be an action item on this month's agenda.
- Research-SBA-Women's Business Center (Grant Opportunity)
- Research-SBA-Accelerators and Other Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Models (Grant Opportunity)
- Research of Smart Growth Grant Opportunities for Eunice

We continue to reach out with the Parish President to each one of the Mayor's within SLP to just establish the open communication that needs to be present in quality relationships that will move the parish forward in positive ways. Most have been contacted and we hope to all within the next month.

## **VII – Training Opportunities**

The next Economic Development Basic Course in near proximity will be offered in Hattiesburg, MS from September 14<sup>th</sup> thru the 18<sup>th</sup> at the University of Southern Mississippi, which is one of only two Universities in the U.S. to offer Doctoral Degrees in Economic Development. I would highly encourage those of you with an interest to getting with me with more questions if you have any interest in this valuable training.

## **VIII – Conclusion**

We continue to be looked at by many people in the parish for that ongoing positive message that positive change is here and that is just the beginning. It is imperative that we collectively continue to be that voice of optimism and solutions for moving the parish

forward. You as board members are an important part of that effort and I am very grateful to all of you for your direct support to me and our staff in promoting this message to the businesses, leadership and residents of our parish. We continue to welcome your thoughts and ideas on things that can help promote our efforts to continue this forward momentum. With your continued active support and input I am confident that we will see unprecedented opportunity blossom through St. Landry Parish in the second half of 2014!