



The mission of St. Landry Parish 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 its youth.

## **Executive Directors Report**

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## **I - Business Center/Small Business Update**

We continue to work with the philosophy on the Business Center that you never have a chance to redo a first impression. We anticipate upgrading to LED lighting throughout the facility will begin in the coming weeks through our participation in the CLECO Utility Program. This will upgrade every light in the facility, both inside and out.

On February 14, 2017, in collaboration with the LSBDC, ULL SBDC business consultant met with five (5) businesses in one-on-one consulting sessions. These discussions were in the areas of business planning, market research and other key services. This increased participation in these numbers demonstrates the strong growing entrepreneurial presence within St. Landry Parish. The next scheduled session will be held at SLED on March 14, 2017. These services are available to businesses at any level of growth, are confidential, and are free to our area businesses.

On Wednesday, February 15, 2017 in partnership with the LSBDC, ULL SBDC, a small business seminar was held titled 'Developing Your Loan Package.' During this workshop business owners learned how to develop a lending package, whether it be for a start up venture or an expansion of a current business.

We will continue to identify partners to align toward meeting the needs of the small business community. We will also be looking at the potential of hosting these seminars at locations alternative locations around the parish during the latter part of this year.

We have received proposals from all contractors involved in determining final costs for the Collaborative Audio Visual Environment (CAVE) in our old kitchen area. We anticipate beginning transformation of area beginning in the latter part of the first quarter of 2017. This will be paid in large part with funds awarded through the Louisiana Business Incubator Association/LBIA grant

We would welcome any feedback on areas of the Center that might have ideas to improve

**We currently have 8, soon to be 9 tenants active in the Business Center:**

C&C Painting and Pressure Washing

Boone Speech and Learning Services

Miracle Ear

Happy Housemaids

Magnolia Community Development Corporation

Victory Manufacturing

WIOA 40

Charles G. Lawson Trucking, Inc

Global Environmental Solutions (March 1, 2017)

## **II – Communications**

We are actively gathering input on our primary website at [www.opportunitystlandry.com](http://www.opportunitystlandry.com) for upgrades and improvements and would value your thoughts and ideas. To implement this overhaul we are working with additional maintenance contractors that will take on the heavy lifting with this project. We are being cautious with the timing of this implementation to ensure it times well with efforts ongoing with the phase of our “Moving Forward” campaign.

To date [www.slpforward.com](http://www.slpforward.com), currently holds a total of sixty-nine (69) articles shining the light on positive things happening throughout St. Landry Parish. One (1) article per week is typically uploaded onto the site on a consistent basis providing fresh and updated article content.

A Google analytics test for the dates of January 17<sup>th</sup> through February 17<sup>th</sup> revealed that SLPForward’s number of page views reached 509 with new sessions at 80%. The analytics trend shows an ongoing, and perhaps a more consistent interest towards the SLP Moving Forward Campaign.

We have secured Right Angle Public Relations Firm to serve as lead in the Phase II of our “Moving Forward” Campaign. Meetings are being scheduled to meet with key stakeholders throughout the parish for research and development purposes as first steps in developing story content. We anticipate this process will last throughout the complete month of February and possible into early March 2017.

Through our continued work with Parish Government on our existing GIS platform, we recently met with the executive team from Fenstermaker & Associates to establish as roadmap towards getting our parish GIS to optimal levels. We will be working to model some of the innovative GIS work done in Lake Charles, Calcasieu Parish, and the Port of Lake Charles. To view the GIS platform it can be found on the home page of [www.opportunitystlandry.com](http://www.opportunitystlandry.com) via internet explorer and/or safari. We plan to have this link accessible through all web browsers, including Google Chrome, in the next 60 – 90 days.

### III – Property/Site Development

There continues to be good progress with the actual and planned development on four of our major interchanges. We will be continuing our focus on building the infrastructure artery capacity in these areas throughout 2017. While some growth is inevitable as Acadiana continues its organic expansion to the north, our goal is to not only accelerate this growth, but also to see it done with a “smart growth” philosophy in mind.

We continue our efforts with the site development team from LED, One Acadiana, as well as private realtors. It is important that we work towards NLT two shovel ready sites for St Landry Parish by the end of 2017. One of the sites in addition to that, Project HIPPO, is still working through some of its final stage permitting and engineering details prior to its certification announcement. This site will begin as a 500-acre heavy industrial site, but will have expansion capacity up to 2,500 acres over time.

**IV Projects Update Summary: 21 Active, 3 Pending Announcement, (Blacktop, Clean, Hippo), 2 New (Project Hue and Project Green) 1 Resurrected (Shell) and 1 Parked (Project Dye) 1 Pending Park (Project Duncan) Please note (Latest Updates)**

**Project Base** – This is a project looking at the utilization of one of core parish transportation facility assets for international business investment. *Latest update:* Discussions with their leadership team have continued as recent as January, but to date we continue to wait on more detail of the phase I plans for the project

**Project Belt** – This project has come about because of local BRE efforts and is a cooperative between a local employer and SLED in trying to bring in a supplier into their existing manufacturing facility. The job creation figures if successful are now estimated up to 45 FTE's. *Latest Update:* Although the project has seen some unforeseen delays, we still expect to get to a go/no go with this project by late first, early second quarter of 2017.

**Project Boost** – This is a very large potential expansion project in terms of capital expenditure. The project would produce less than 15 new employees at very high wage scales and well up to 170 temporary construction jobs for a year or more. *Latest Update:* The Company is finalizing some of the permitting process, as well as the financial package for the project. We are still optimistic these pieces will come together, but the due to recent merger talks the project will likely be delayed to go/no go until late 1<sup>st</sup>, early 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2017.

**Project Black Top** – This is a location expansion project with a well-established area company. The company will be looking to consolidate central operation into a newly constructed central administration facility. *Latest Update:* We are still waiting on the

exact number of FTE's for this project, but still anticipate construction, as well as a formal announcement to come forth very soon.

**Project Bulletproof** – This is a new recruitment light manufacturing project looking hard at an existing facility in the parish. If successful this project would create up to 100 FTE's. *Latest Update:* This is an RFP project with LED and OA. While the project is still on the table, the big pending decision continues to be the company's willingness to commit to an expansion at this time. We anticipate final clarity on this project sometime in the next in early 2017.

**Project Clean** – This is a manufacturing infill development project located in the center of the parish. If successful this project will create 50 new direct positions, with the ability to grow up to 100 FTE's. *Latest Update:* The success of this project currently hinges on the ability to rezone the existing facility towards suitable use. We are continuing our work as a liaison with company and local officials to get through this hurdle. This is the final hurdle prior to the company purchasing the existing facility. This project has a high probability of being announced in the late 1<sup>st</sup> to early 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter.

**Project Duncan** – This project is a cooperative submittal with OA and LED. It deals with a light fabrication and assembly. It has a CAPEX of \$3 million, 85 permanent jobs, with an average production wage is \$19.50 per hour plus benefits. *Latest Updates:* We are working with the development teams to get clarification on whether this project still has potential for the property submitted in St Landry. Pending no new updates this project may be slated for the parking lot on the next report update.

**Project Expo** – *Latest Update:* The conclusion step in the option agreement is in the works with the final survey and legal description now nearing its completion. The survey had been complete, but on final review by the Boyd legal team it was identified that there were some changes in the survey and legal description that needed to be done. This is in process now and we anticipate the final document over the next couple of weeks. Our trip on Feb 13<sup>th</sup> to the Boyd Gaming Property located in Wichita Kansas, known as the Kansas Star had to be postponed due to scheduling conflicts. We are working now to look at potential dates in March, April, or May to be considered.

**Project Fountain** – This is a large scale commercial development project that discussions have been ongoing for some time. National tenants remain committed to this project and negotiations with landowners and real estate development partners are continuing. *Latest Update:* We continue active discussions on how this project can be combined with Project Expo planning efforts to create a destination location.

**Project Green** – This is a heavy industrial project looking to locate in central St. Landry due to the unique infrastructure assets. The project has a CAPEX of 203 million and would create 75 direct full time positions and more than 1000 temporary construction positions. *Latest update:* We just received the project intake worksheet on the project and will be participating in some investment partner discussion of the next 60 to 90 to drill down feasibility.

**Project Hue** -- This is a joint submittal project with OA and LED. The project has a CAPEX of 50 million. The project would create 40 direct jobs at an average annual wage of \$60,000. Eligible sites are expected to be chosen Q2/3 2017. Construction on this project would start in 2018 and operational would begin by 2020. *Latest update:* RFP response sent the week of Feb 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Project Fresh** – This is an expansion for the company in Louisiana, but a recruitment project for our parish. Initial job creation numbers are less than 6 with room for expansion. The project hinges to some degree on project vertical with land acquisition. *Latest Update:* We received a letter of interest to move forward with property negotiations. We are currently waiting on an impact worksheet for the project and are assured that there is still active interest. This project also considers Project Vertical on finalizing site property layout.

**Project HIPPO** – This is a heavy industrial project that is very large in scope on its investment and job creation potential. Currently, we are working with regional and state partners on identifying and meeting engineering requirements on the footprint site. *Latest Update:* As of last week, the permitting for this project is on schedule to be completed in in late first, early second quarter at which point this project will be announced as the Nexus Energy Park.

**Project League** – This is a new recruitment project with major impact potential that would expand across the region and even the state. If successful this project would create up to 100 white collar high paying positions, collectively averaging close to 100k annually. *Latest Update:* Our latest feedback from company leaders continues to be cautious, but positive. We remain on a short list, but company officials are still working through details on partnerships in the education and investment areas. Our hope is to have more clarity with on whether these necessary partnerships will be a reality by the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter.

**Project Nova** – This is joint submission project with OA and LED. It is a light manufacturer looking to locate in an existing central parish facility. This project would look to invest up to 4 million in facility upgrades and employ 50 full time positions over the first 3 years of operations. This is on the short list of two sites for the state so it has strong potential for a site visit in the near future. *Latest Update:* We are waiting confirmation from the site consultant on if there will be an onsite visit scheduled.

**Project Protect** - This is an in parish expansion project that has already made the land acquisition for their new site. The project could expand to up to 12 new manufacturing positions once the new location is operational. *Latest Update:* Latest discussions are that the company still has the potential for beginning their new construction in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter.

**Project Ride** – This project represents an expansion of a large area retail site in the center of the parish. This project could create up to 50 new positions. *Latest Update:* There were key meetings at the corporate level with this project last week that will

identify local ownership and operation of the facility. We expect this information to be available over the next 60 days and are optimistic this project could be in construction by the end of the year.

**Project Rest** – This project deals with the redevelopment and reuse of land surrounding one of our interstate intersections. There continues to be positive meetings with pivotal state agencies to move the project forward. Detailed job creations figures are still not available on the project. *Latest Update:* The investor group for this project has recently had their project plan turned down by DOTD and now in the process of appealing this decision.

**Project Shell** –The project is looking to refocus their feasibility back at the original building site, or a greenfield site in near proximity. If successful, this project could create up to 20 new positions. *Latest Update:* This was a previously parked project that now has been brought back into play. We hope to have clarity one way, or another in the next 45 to 60 days.

**Project Sugar Tree** – This is cooperative SLED, OA and LED Project that is working directly with a project development company to find the perfect site for a new biomass-based manufacturing facility. CAPEX estimated to be \$150 million for Phase 1, and roughly double that investment for Phase 2 (approximately 18 months later) for a total CAPEX of \$300 million Permanent jobs – 60 (30 in Phase 1 and Phase 2) Average annual wage of \$65,000 excluding benefits. There is an expected final site short list decision at point in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2017.

**Project Vanilla** – This is a cooperative site submittal with OA and LED. Their site consultant has on a quick turnaround. The project is targeted towards an industrial facility to batch process chemicals for the oil and gas industry. At this stage the project does not have investment and job creation figures, but has specific site requirements that are a good fit for 2 SLP sites. Each of these has been submitted. *Latest Update:* We are still waiting results from the evaluation process.

**Project Vertical** – This project is dealing with a light industrial manufacturer looking to put a new production facility in the Parish. If successful this project would create up to 30 direct full time positions. *Latest Update:* As of late last month, we are still on formal funding verification from their overseas investment group. We are still waiting on a updated project intake worksheet for this project so that a presentation can be made to the board on a property offer consideration.

## **Announced Projects**

**Project Brace – Announced Retention – Expansion** - This is a retention project involving the purchase of an existing facility here in the parish. We are working closely with LED, as well as One Acadiana on this effort. If successful this project would protect as many as 65 existing positions, as well as offer the potential to expand an additional 25 positions at this location. *Latest Update:* This project was released as a joint announcement through the Governor's Office and LED last week.

**Project Lot – Announced Expansion** - This project is the expansion of an existing parish company into construction at new location and the further modification and refit of their existing facility within the parish. Assuming the existing facility backfills the same number of positions in its new use this project would create 45 new direct full time positions. The existing location now has approximately 25 full time positions. Latest Update: There is a ground breaking announcement on this project scheduled for September 22<sup>nd</sup> on site in the Harry Guilbeau District at 10:00. This project is a major step forward in the future of the Harry Guilbeau EDD.

**Project Lid – Announced Regional Retention** - This project will relocate up to 100 immediate jobs and has potential to add an extra 75 full time direct positions to the parish for a total of 175 positions. The ground breaking ceremony for this project, C&G Container Scientific, was held on April 11<sup>th</sup> on site and was very well attended.

**Project Outpost (A) – Announced Recruitment** - This is a one of a kind Loves Travel Center that broke ground early in January 2016 in Port Barre. This will be the first center for Loves not located on an interstate highway. The location will serve as a full service 24 Hour travel center with a Subway Restaurant on location. This project will create at up to 35 direct full time positions.

**Project Bayou – Announced Recruitment** - This Wal-Mart Neighbor Center projected was announced earlier this month as being an example of highlighting the retail development potential here in the center of the Parish. This project is well into its construction process now and is projecting a formal opening on January 20<sup>th</sup>. This project will create between 90 and 100 direct full time positions.

**Project Slip – Announced Expansion** - This project was a major turnaround project with the Alon Refinery in Krotz Springs. The company made major investments in this effort, which brings significantly enhanced capacity to the Alon facility. For industry concerns the company would prefer that this project not be included in a major press announcement. This does not diminish the positive impact on our parish from this project. SLP Tourism continues to recognize record breaking lodging numbers for the later portion of 2015 as temporary workers made their place in area hotels, campgrounds, and RV Facilities. Over 2000 temporary construction jobs were brought into the parish with this effort. We are working now to confirm the number of permanent jobs that will ultimately be created with this expansion. We do not anticipate this number exceeding 15 in total.

**Project Outpost – Announced Recruitment** - This is the original Project Outpost. This project, the Go Bear Travel Center is going to be opening its doors within the next 2 weeks. The company is Gaubert Oil, which is base out of the Houma Thibodaux area and will be the 13<sup>th</sup> retail travel facility for the company. We along with Acadiana Works has been providing various levels of hiring assistance, including the use of the Business Center to interview management candidates for the new facility. This project is projected to create up to 45 new full time positions.



**Project Lynx – Announced Recruitment** -This project, The Hazelwood Energy Project, was formally announced on Sept 30<sup>th</sup>. This project is projected to create 123 direct full time positions, 135 indirect positions and 200 temporary construction related positions. Initial capital investment projections on this project are 400 million. This project also has the potential to lay the framework for significant future development.

**Project Spin – Announced Recruitment** This project is a small project that we are piloting as an incubation for oil field support services in C&C machining with Victory Manufacturing. We had hoped throughout the later part of 2015 to make a large announcement, but the company principal had some health challenges that slowed their work to a temporary stop. We are hopeful that in supporting this area of high demand labor force that we will be able to keep some of our machinist workforce in the parish with career opportunities.

**Project Lift – Announced Recruitment** - This project was formally announced over the weekend. The company Air Evac Life team will be basing rotary wing operations out of the St Landry Parish Airport. They are completing significant upgrades to one of the existing facilities and now have aircraft on the ground to assume operations. This successful project further highlights the huge upside for the SLP Airport, which tends to get overlooked as a key transportation asset of St Landry Parish. This project is anticipated to create 16 direct full time positions.

**Project Strip – Announced Expansion** - This is a large commercial project on a large multi-tenant commercial facility located on the I-49 Service road corridor, St Landry Plaza. The company, Rock Step Capital, made a formal announcement earlier this month through their President, My Andy Wiener. He pledged to bring as many as 8 new national tenants to the facility over the next 2 years. This project could allow for up to 75 direct full time and a greater number of part time employees.

**Project Essen - Announced Expansion** Crest Industries, based in Pineville, Louisiana, will invest \$5 million to develop a new cutting, machining and fabrication facility in Eunice and add new machining centers to existing PCS equipment. Crest will retain 18 PCS jobs, and the expansion project will create 20 new jobs averaging \$50,000 per year, plus benefits. LED estimates the investment will result in an additional 24 indirect jobs, for a total of 44 new jobs in the Acadiana Region.

**Project Rip – Announced Recruitment** - This Company, Top Timber, and deals with the timber hardwood related processing. It is located to the rear of S&B Sawmill in the proximity of the Wal-Mart Distribution Center. The company had indicated that it could initially employ up to 12 full time positions with the potential to grow very quickly if certain international agreements can be established.

**Project Roto – Announced Expansion** - This is an existing company within the Parish, Noble Plastics that has acquired the Yahoo building to begin production of additional plastics components through a process call roto mold plastics production. There is a good potential that this project would bring in a partner supplier, Project Mat. This

project will initially create 15 or less direct full time positions, but has a great potential for future expansion.

**Project Alon – Announced Expansion** - 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. The project will create as many as 12 full time positions.

**Project Runway – Announced Recruitment:** A formal announcement was made for this project 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 building process. The company expects operations to commence in a matter of weeks. This project will create as many as 25 direct full time positions.

**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:**

##### *OA (One Acadiana)*

We continue to work on regional planning and visioning efforts with leadership from OA, the APC, LEDA and other key regional partners. Because of significant planning efforts already completed, we hope to have the framework in place for some regional strategic collaboration priorities in March. One of the considerations currently being vetted is a community accelerator program that would assist communities in learning how to go from being reactive in their short and long term processes, to be proactive towards “smart growth”.

One of the recent successes in this kind of high level regional collaboration has been the regional business accelerator effort. This will be a partnership with the Economic Development Administration (EDA) Winrock International, Chase Bank, One Acadiana, AEDC and INNOV8 Acadiana. This program has been very successful in identifying and accelerating the growth of small companies in Arkansas over the past 3 years and it is the culmination of more than a years’ worth of application and preparation. The team from InnoV8 continues to identifying suitable companies to participate in the process.

We continue to actively participate in the ARA (Acadiana Regional Alliance), which is made up of area Tourism entities, Chambers of Commerce, and Economic Development organizations. The organization hosted an annual regional tour last week that focused on Jeff Davis and St Martin Parishes, Some of the other key near term items this group is involved in currently are:

- Recently completed the building the region conference in Jeff Davis and St Martin Parishes.
- Planning and hosting Acadiana Day at the Capitol (Regular Session)
- Providing regular inputs and updates to the I-49 Connector Project.

For 2017 we have set an initial target of sitting down with quality meetings with 20 of our top parish employers. Our goal will be not only to determine any challenges, or opportunities for these employers, but also to continue to improve the quality of relationships with these leaders so that they can provide input on key challenges and decisions we are actively engaged in around the parish, the region, and the state. We have started this effort with:

- Stage Retail
- Giles Automotive Group
- St Landry Homestead

We also have some very specific organizational goals that associate with these visits through 2017. One, is to find a good fit with the Economic Gardening Program offered through LED for at least one of our parish employers. Another is to identify and assist in expansion opportunities for at least three of our parish employers. Some of these efforts are well in the works with projects listed in the report.

SLP Schools continues their new path with Mr. Patrick Jenkins as the new Superintendent of Schools. The School Board held a planning retreat on January 28<sup>th</sup> with solids results. We have also been working with Mr. Jenkins in multiple areas, including the Phase II of our moving forward, consideration of a strategic plan for the district, and ways that a “grass roots” awareness of the importance for parents and the community to be involved with education This is an important opportunity for our parish to move forward, but will take an “all hands-on deck” mentality to seize the full potential.

We are actively working on the advisory board for the OGH Bio Medical Academy here in Opelousas to help develop the most of the great offerings that they have in place. On February 2<sup>nd</sup> at LSU-E, we helped coordinate, along with other key partners to provide the student a seminar style career awareness event LSU-E. This event gave the students a chance to participate in a broad range of breakout sessions relevant to their future academic and professional aspirations. It also gave the students a chance to see first-hand the great culture and overall academic environment that exists at the LSU-E Campus.

We will be looking at ways that we can provide expanded potential for SLCC and the TH Harris Campus in the Phase II of our “Moving Forward” Program focus on education. We also continue to look for opportunities to engage their corporate college into efforts for local business. We have also agreed to once again support a SLED scholarship for a

St Landry Parish resident attending SLCC next year through proceeds provided through GOEIDC. We are working to coordinate our scholarship recipient with a SLED Mtg. He really has a fantastic story to tell.

Enrollment for the spring semester has increased significantly at LSU-E, which again had the highest percentage of enrollment increase of all Louisiana Universities. We will be working with their leadership on ways to play an expanded role the phase II of the “Moving Forward” Program and its heavy focus on education.

We have also agreed to once again support a SLED scholarship for a St Landry Parish resident attending LSU-E next year through proceeds provided through GOEIDC.

We are actively participating as a member of their board of advisors with the goal of making this group more proactive and relevant towards helping grow the capacity and awareness of LSU-E. We had a very productive initial planning meeting in January to begin setting the framework for a more proactive 2017 with a follow up scheduled for later this week.

We continue to make progress with the CEO Roundtable support organization called Vision St Landry on strategically identifying priorities that could have significant impacts for SLP over the next 5 – 20 years. The group will be meeting this month in each of its respective focus groups with regards to *education, redevelopment of downtowns and growing the I-49 Corridor*. Each of these focus groups are tracking the progress of these initiatives in a matrix dashboard that is reported on to the entire board in quarterly meetings.

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

The St Luke’s Hospital is now in its final stages of legal resolution. The St Martin and St Landry Parish Councils have both voted to dissolve the board. The next step in the process is the physical transition of ownership and responsibility of the facility to St Landry Parish.

As part of the regular meeting agenda we will be providing an update on a plan for the DDA in Opelousas. Opelousas falls directly into the middle of some of our key priorities for 2017, which are:

- Developing the I-49 Corridor – ECJC DDD expansion progress, Vision Focus Group
- Revitalizing Downtowns – DDD Improvement Plan, Vision Focus Group

- Improving Education – 100-day Superintendent Plan, Vision Focus Group

It will take a collective and concerted effort from across the parish to advance these priorities, but the effort will pay big dividends for the parish overall in the long-term.

We are continuing to work with the leadership of Port Barre on proactive measures that will help their community prepare for what promises to be a robust and bright future of substantial growth and development. Their latest efforts are also part of the regular board agenda.

We continue to work towards regaining progress with the leadership of Eunice on how we can best help them to identify and progress priorities for their community. The Mayor of Eunice recently graduated from the ED 101 course that SLED paid the tuition. We had a follow up meeting with him last week and by his own account, this was one of the best education courses he has ever participated in. We anticipate some good progress on proactive efforts in Eunice over the remainder of this year.

Progress continues with the community of Grand Coteau on planning and infrastructure efforts along their business corridor. Engineering plans are in the process with several of their priority projects that will dramatically enhance the development of their business corridor. These projects include; a traffic solution at the frontage road cross over intersection, a pedestrian transportation plan, wastewater and water improvements in the district, overhead lighting at the interchange and improvements in landscape and art scape at the overpass.

The Place Making Task Force comprised of businesses from the Sunset, Grand Coteau and Arnaudville area have established project priorities that will result in business growth as they become successful. This group will be focusing on at least three priority projects for 2017 in the area of highway 93. These project will include as a minimum; the 'Hanging Garden Project' which is a public art piece that will ultimately develop an art scape along the arts corridor, the St Luke Hospital Cultural Immersion Project, and the Sunset High School Redevelopment Project. This group last met on Monday February 13<sup>th</sup> where progress updates were provided as it relates to the three (3) stated projects above. An additional project was identified in that of the Sunset Recreation Club, formerly a world renowned chicken fighting arena. It is anticipated that the next scheduled meeting to be held on March 20<sup>th</sup> will take place at the facility to provide members a complete tour and consider future opportunities for its use. It is important that more people become aware of these efforts so that they can continue to build momentum. The group will next meet on Monday, March 20<sup>th</sup> at 5:30.

The Steamboat City Association is continuing to provide scholarships for graduating seniors, support and enlarge hot meals to elderly shut-ins, provide manpower and

money to rehabilitate substandard homes, and is diligently considering ways to provide regular transportation to doctors and stores for those who need it.

On January 30<sup>th</sup> TheSLP announced its new board for 2017 calendar year. Four (4) new board members were selected, representing multiple areas as well as demographics throughout the parish. We held our first board meeting on February 2<sup>nd</sup> where key organizational priorities were identified for the upcoming year as well as potential projects that can make a long term sustainable impact with the parish. Our next scheduled SLP Board meeting will be held on March 2<sup>nd</sup> at 4:00 pm with location TBD.

Wednesday, February 15<sup>th</sup> ‘TheSLP: Cocktails and Conversations’ was held at Frank’s Po’boys located in Opelousas, La. Our first social event of the year was the most attended since SLP’s conception and the buzz received throughout the area has been overwhelmingly positive. The event success can be widely attributed to the organization’s new website design and social media presence as well as a restructured outlook on what as young professionals we want to accomplish and it can be summed up in as little as four words, “Let’s Get Stuff Done!”

### **Grants Update:**

With funds received under the Louisiana Business Incubator Association/LBIA grant to date we have secured a layout design along with selection of furniture and have identified needs for the audio/visual piece. We have received final proposals from all contractors involved in determining final costs for the Collaborative Audio Visual Environment (CAVE) in our old kitchen area. We anticipate beginning transformation of area beginning in the latter part of the first quarter of 2017.

We have worked with leaders in the Acadiana Planning Commission, as well as the Leadership in Grand Coteau in applying for a DOTD TAP Grant designed to address the accessibility and safety of pedestrian transportation in the business district area of Grand Coteau.

We are also working with the Acadiana Planning Commission, APC, on identifying good fits for a recently announced pedestrian safety grant that offers up to 350k for each qualifying project. This consideration is based largely off of previous pedestrian safety incidents so if you know of particularly dangerous pedestrian areas in your communities, please let us know.

As part of our 2017 goal structure we will continue to explore the potential for two successful grant applications that will make a meaningful impact on our mission and efforts to build capacity in the parish. We will be looking closely at USDA Grant

opportunities over the next couple of months as their award cycle is generally in the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> quarter.

We will be looking to finalize and implement planning and engineering efforts within the Harry Guilbeau EDD with funds received through the capital outlay process last fall.

## **VII – Training Opportunities**

### True South Basic Economic Development Course

Course Overview: The Basic Economic Development Course is an introductory look at economic development in North America. Students are given an overview of the tools and techniques of modern economic development, including the professional specialties that have formed in the last 20 years.

September 11 - 14, 2017

Location: Hattiesburg, MS

Contact: Chad R. Miller, PhD, ([chad.r.miller@usm.edu](mailto:chad.r.miller@usm.edu))

Phone: (601) 266-6666

Website: [www.usm.edu](http://www.usm.edu)

## **VIII – Conclusion**

While there is no doubt that this upcoming year will have plenty of challenges, particularly for our state at the legislative level. On brighter notes, there is good evidence to support a stabilizing of the overall Acadiana Economy for 2017. There is also good evidence that 2017 will be a year that sees federal policy shift towards one of being more business-friendly policy from D.C. Combined with the proactive planning and strategic efforts here in St Landry we anticipate a new and accelerated wave of momentum to grow throughout this year.

Your backing has been instrumental in allowing us to make meaningful progress on frameworks that will set a path for continued growth for St Landry Parish over the next 5, 10, 15 years, and beyond. We have always said it is in the challenges where the opportunities lay in disguise for the right kinds of proactive thinking. With your tremendous support, we continue to stay “Moving Forward” and leaders of positive change that will bring a bright future for St Landry Parish!