



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 youth.

Executive Directors Report

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I - Business Center/Small Business Update

There was a small business startup/financing training session held concurrently with LSU-E, and the SBDC on the LSU-E campus on February 25th. The event was very well attended with more than 20 individuals in attendance. We also cosponsored a Community Leadership Roundtable Session that was held here at the Business Center on February 25th. This event featured presentations by:

Robert Wolfe - Adams and Reese Law Firm; Presented on the DHH and DEQ revolving loan funds available for communities to do water and sewer infrastructure upgrades

Mark Drennon – Cornerstone Governmental Affairs; Presented on how the capital outlay process functions and the capital outlay outlook for 2015 in Louisiana.

Ronnie Harris – Louisiana Municipal Association; Presented on no cost LMA services available to help communities address blighted properties in their area.

Work within the Business Center on items related to the LBIA Grant Award is ongoing. The installation of a central HVAC system in the warehouse office suite is now complete. The contractor has started with the HVAC upgrades on the north end of the building, which is where the conference room is located. Once this work is complete the contractor will begin work on installing a fan vent system for the attic to the front of the Business Center, as well as the warehouse.

Great news! We have received the closeout letter to GOEIDC from OCD. We will not be able to fully put this behind us until a final audit of the funds is complete and turned in, but from OCD's perspective this is complete. Once the financial audit is complete, the ownership of the facility will be formally transferred from GOEIDC to SLED per contractual agreement.

We have the following tenant activity at the Business Center:

As of March 1st we have the following businesses/spaces being occupied.

C&C Painting and Pressure Washing

Excellent Drivers Academy

A 24/7 Inspection Services (March 13 move out)

Boone Speech and Learning Services

Miracle Ear

Eckerd Youth Alternatives (3 Spaces)

Happy Housemaids

Magnolia Community Development Corporation (April 1st Move In)

II – Communications

Our communications coordinator continues to serve as the website content editor; updating and/or adding pictures or text to the SLED website as new information becomes available. Additionally, daily routine maintenance regarding trend updates is monitored, which ensures that the site, graphics, color schemes and layout remain up to date. It is a continuous style update that ensures that the site continues to look great. To remain informed involving all things SLED please visit www.opportunitystlandry.com.

An example of the value of our enhanced web presence is evident in our website's role in being the online application and ultimate collection point for persons interested in being on the Event Center Joint Commission in the Economic Development District.

Brandy has started a more aggressive presentation outreach with promoting the SLP and some of their latest happens. This month she had a very successful presentation to the Eunice Rotary Club.

Our Communications Coordinator continues to compile a complete database of information beneficial to agencies and organizations throughout St. Landry Parish, as well as entities looking at St Landry from the outside through web related venues. This data collection effort will be stepped up dramatically over the next coming months as we look aggressively outreach to parish employers and gather direct data and feedback from them through these visits.

Our conversation with Parish partners, along with GIS vendors continues. We are looking at the potential for more effective GIS platform integration as part of our parish presence, which would be above the efforts already done at the regional level, social media, "wiki" style updating systems and other progressive tools that can enhance our "progressive" web presence.

III - Property Development (Large-scale)

We continue, along with other key stakeholders and leaders on outreach and incentive structuring along our major transportation corridors. We now have active projects being discussed at 4 major interchanges on the I-49 corridor. Many of the projects listed in project list fit into these geographies. All of these developments will also have an enhanced scope of development beyond the specific project that is being listed. In other words, the project being listed will serve as the anchor and if successful these projects will bring additional information in behind them. Fountain, Expo, Outpost (B) and Lid all

have large scale property development considerations that have the ability to affect beyond the anchor tenants on these projects.

Work continues with LED and AEDC on certifying industrial sites within the Parish. We are now bringing the newly formed team 1 Acadiana into these discussions as well. Our biggest challenge at this point in time is not just identifying quality sites, but finding property owners, or ownership groups that are willingly to consider a sale.

IV Projects Update

Summary: 19 Active, 6 Announced, 1 Parked (Alberta), 1 Pending Park, (Prairie)

Project Amber – This project is contingent on some rail upgrades in the Opelousas Industrial Park. There has been significant progress in discussions on the initial expansion with the City of Opelousas over the past 2 weeks. There could be a decision contingent on rail within the next 4 – 6 weeks. If successful this project could create up to 10 full time positions.

Project Bayou – This is a retail recruitment project targeted for the center of the parish. The company is concluding their due diligence process now. The property being considered was recently approved for annexation, which is a very positive development in getting infrastructure to the site. Assuming successful completion of this process this project could be announced in the 1st quarter of 2015. If successful this project could create up to 55 direct full time positions.

Project Code – This is a new expansion project focused on light manufacturing looking to locate on the main transportation corridor in the center of the Parish. Discussions are underway with numerous property owners at this time. The project is in early stages. If successful the project could create up to 20 full time positions.

Project Cloak (Lynx) – Although the details of this project continue to be highly confidential, there continue to be very positive developments and discussions with key players through a recently conducted site visit to the Parish. It is possible that an announcement on this project could come in the next 45 days if some of the remaining challenges can be overcome. This project could potentially create in excess of 60 direct full time positions, but could potentially have an unprecedented economic impact 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. Significant efforts and discussions on these upgrades have recommenced in earnest since the holiday. The time frame for a decision on this project has been moved to early 2nd Qtr 2015. This project could potentially create in excess of 12 direct full time positions

Project Expo – A quick review and look going forward will be provided for as part of the Expo Committee report. The main focus at this time is putting together a quality applicant pool of commissioners to fill the seven positions currently being advertised.

Project Focus – Large scope project dealing with historic properties in the parish. Initial meetings with the partners have been positive. This project would be primarily event driven so the number of jobs created would vary. Some changes in leadership in certain municipal elected positions may help to give this project some additional momentum. It is still too early to project a job creation potential on this project.

Project Fountain – This is a large scale commercial development project that discussions have been ongoing for some time. There have been very positive high level meetings over the past month with this project. A master plan for the project should be complete in the next couple of weeks with a follow up company executive meeting to be scheduled shortly after. This project, if successful, could have a legacy impact on the parish, as well as the region, by the capital expenditure and job creation resulting from the development.

Project Lid – This project is a manufacturer looking to locate along one of our key transportation corridors. The company has entered into a purchase agreement on the property, which is a big positive. They are now working on finance structuring for the new operation. They would anticipate closing on the property in the next 90 days. If successful, this project could relocate up to 100 immediate jobs and the addition of an extra 75 full time direct positions to the parish for a total of 175 positions.

Project Prairie – This is an in-state expansion project targeted for the western part of the parish. Company executives have concluded visiting sites and buildings with community representatives. We would expect to have more clear direction by the company on this project, possibly in January, but likely within the first quarter of 2015. A recent update on this project puts the project on temporary hold until there is a recovery in crude oil pricing. If successful, this project could create up to 15 direct full time employees.

Project Mat – This project directly ties back into Project Roto. The company is one of the suppliers in their system and is very interested in starting an additional location on site if certain transportation infrastructure assets can be put in place, most notably rail infrastructure upgrades in the Opelousas Industrial Park. If successful, this project could potentially create in excess of 40 direct full time positions.

Project Neighbor – This is a medium size retail location project on the western side of the parish. Work is continuing with their design team and local officials on the infrastructure access to the development site. We anticipate the conclusion of this project's future in the early second quarter of 2015. If successful, this project could create in excess of 65 direct full time positions.

Project Outpost (A) - The national tenant is in under contract and in the due diligence stage on one site located on Hwy 190. One of the last hurdles on this project is a transportation plan authorization from State DOTD. We have received tentative approval on version 16 of the transportation plan for this site. This is one of the final steps in the companies due diligence process and we should be looking at formally

moving forward with this project very shortly. If successful this project could create up to 30 direct full time positions.

Project Outpost (B) This national tenant has finalized a purchase contract on a 2nd site location along a high profile transportation corridor within the Parish. After much collaborative effort and meetings with local, parish, regional and other entities we were able to submit the \$800,000 EDA Infrastructure Grant on March 11th. This grant, if successful, will allow water/sewer/fire suppression capacity for the site that will include multiple tenants. If successful, this project could create up to 45 full time positions for the anchor, as well as many additional positions in outlying parcel developments.

Project Pacific – This project deals with agricultural production and subsequent efforts to create exports of various agricultural commodities prevalent in the parish. There are a lot of moving pieces needed to bring this project to a viable stage. We continue to work with our Parish leadership to vet the viability of this project and hope to have some conclusion within the next 30 to 60 days. There are no estimates on job creation with this project at this time.

Project Service – This project is looking at an existing large vacant building location within the parish for a transportation distribution company and would be a great infill development story within the parish. There have been some delays on the company side of things due to a corporate merger, which has put all new property acquisitions on temporary hold. The bias for this project is still very positive. If successful, this project could create up to 11 full time positions. This project could also be a tremendous boost to infill development by refitting a vacant building in an area badly needing this progression

Project Slip – This project deals with a reorganization/expansion of a large parish employer. We are in the process now of working with private ownership on a new location. We anticipate executive site visits next week. Exact job expansion and creation numbers are still not available on this project.

Project Spin – This project is a light industrial application looking for relocation. Currently we are working on site assistance for this project in the early stages. If successful this project could create up to 15 full time positions over time. We are in current negotiations with the company on the potential for the back warehouse portion of the Business Center.

Project Shield – Company executives continue to work through items related to the final decision process on this head quarters relocation. There are still very positive discussions with the company, however; to date we have not been able to secure availability to the “right” piece of property. We have had in depth discussions with the owners and expect to know more of their intent in the next 45 days or so. Once this happens we will recommence facilitating the connection on this site. If successful, this project could bring up to 400 direct positions in St Landry Parish.

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, 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 20th 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:

With the assistance of some of our board members, we continue to make significant strides in building a partnership with the Farm Bureau of St. Landry Parish. This has included a very productive initial meeting with their key leaders; a presentation at their monthly board meeting, and an introduction at their very well attended annual meeting held in Opelousas last Saturday evening, as well as presenting at their annual legislative dinner in which Agriculture Secretary, Mike Strain was in attendance. As is noted on regular occasion, for every dollar earned within the parish in the agricultural industry there is a 3x turnover on this dollar. This puts agriculture at an excess of 400 million dollar per year direct/indirect impact on the parish economy.

Collaboration efforts with the St. Landry Chamber of Commerce board are moving forward at multiple levels. Brandy has done a great job in helping them to set up Annual Banquet, which will be held this week on March 19th. We will also be once again sponsoring an entrepreneur and community engagement award to businesses from within the Parish as a part of this event. Other efforts with the chamber include facilitating collaborative discussions on how we can provide support needed to strengthen the education community throughout the parish. Our overall collaborative objective is to identify and provide solutions to key issues that, if improved, will provide greater value to businesses in St. Landry Parish.

Our work with SLP Tourism continues. The staffs of both agencies continue to collaborate on ideas and concepts for joint marketing and parish promotion. We regularly attend their monthly board meetings to provide some of the latest updates in economic development to their board, as well as further explore joint collaboration opportunities.

We are working closely with several key parish agencies at bringing in some progressive technology tools such as Pictometry and a dedicated, but buildable GIS platform. These are tools that can be utilized by multiple parish entities to give a consistent, but progressive look and feel to their priorities and to the parish as a whole. We are working currently to solidify cost proposals from an additional vendor. This process should be complete this week.

Multiple BERG collaboration meetings have been held over the past of couple weeks. We have met with the following companies:

- Wal-Mart Distribution Center
- Alon Refinery Krotz Springs
- Savoie's
- Tony Chachere's

Brandy has had initial training on the Synchronist Database Program to input company visit data. We will soon be scheduling physical collaborative visits with not only the top 25 driver companies, but also companies within the smaller communities that have very large impacts of scale.

There have been multiple positive meetings with the Chancellor of SLCC and some of her key staff on the future of TH Harris Campus Programs and priorities. , Our focus is how we along with other parish partners, could collectively work towards successful outcomes for their strategic priorities.

We continue to promote the efforts of LSU-E on using IWTP funding as part of their value component to area and parish businesses. Supporting this effort will be a key piece of our business expansion and retention efforts as IWTP continues to be one of the most highly regarded business workforce support tools available in the State.

We also continue to support the LSU Board of Advisors as they refine their search for a new Chancellor. This search is now in its fourth phase and continues to move forward with some very solid candidates being considered.

As a quick recap, even with some downturn in certain areas of the oil and gas industry there continues to be positive feedback on progress with some of the major companies in SW Louisiana. Sasol recently held a very well attended regional supplier opportunity session to help bring local area contractors “into the know” on how to get work in their large expansion project.

We met three weeks ago, along with the Parish President and Cornerstone Governmental Affairs with the Director of Facilities and planning to discuss parish capital requests, a hanger for the airport and lighting upgrade for the Delta Grand to be included on the final bonding agenda. We also discussed some capital outlay requests in the system for Eunice, as well as the request for the Economic Development District.

We continue to hold regular meetings/conference calls 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. We have a list of items that we review each week to prioritize for what is sure to be a very challenging legislative budget session. We also continue to let Mayors of the parish know that this is intended to be there as a resource for their priorities and challenges as well.

We recently met, along with the Parish President and key persons from Cornerstone Governmental Affairs, with three more of our legislative delegation for St. Landry to discuss our capital outlay requests for this upcoming session. These include: Senator Mills; Rep Thierry; Rep Guillory. We have now met with all of the delegation face to face at least once in preparation for this year’s legislative session.

We continue to offer assistance and active participation to the Parish President in helping to support the Acadiana Planning Commission, APC. The strategic portion of this effort is being spearheaded by the South Central Planning and Development District (SCPDD).

We have become actively engaged with the ARA (Acadiana Regional Alliance) which will be a critical partner as part of the 1 Acadiana effort bringing Chamber of

Commerce's and related entities to the table as an important voice of a regional economic effort.

AEDC (Acadiana Economic Development Council) Update:

The 1 Acadiana has been and continues to be a strong area of focus for the AEDC Board. Recent updates from 1 Acadiana related to, or specifically impacting economic development includes:

Meeting the 3 Million dollar annual fundraising objective

Name being officially changed to 1 Acadiana

Hiring of a regional business development person

Appointing AEDC Chairperson as a member of the executive committee

A very successful March 12th Regional Celebration Dinner

We also continue to work as a board to form a working blueprint for AEDC as part of a new regional economic development strategy, which includes the utilization of the Tier I funding through LED that helps to market and promote the Acadiana Region. There will be a short introduction of the key players in this effort as part of the regular board agenda.

Vermillion Parish recently had its newly appointed economic development director to the AEDC Board, which takes the place of a position formally held by their Chamber of Commerce President.

We have provided direct support to promoting this effort through multiple collaborative radio spots at stations in Lafayette.

We have been active in participating in and following the priorities for Louisiana Association of Business and Industry, (LABI) and their priorities for this upcoming legislative session in the interests of business. Their priorities this year are to:

Make sure transportation is a priority

Continue to improve the legal tort environment that is detrimental to business

Workforce Development Focus

VI – Community Development in St Landry Parish

Last week we served as part of a panel to select a consultant group that will do a thorough evaluation of the Cultural Economy of Arnaudville, which includes the potential alternative usage of St Luke's Hospital. The consultant is tasked with providing a business/strategic plan that will help the community maximize its cultural development potential. This is a very exciting multi parish/state collaboration initiative that could end

up promoting broad scale cultural economy impact in the region. We selected Ardyn Co as the consultant out of a close decision with another highly qualified candidate.

We are reaching to, along with the Parish President to each of the newly elected Mayor's in the parish to start the discussion on identifying their priorities and looking for ways where we can provide support. Since the last report we have had meetings with the Mayor's of Sunset and Cankton.

We continue to help facilitate meetings with SCPDD/APC and leadership in Eunice about moving forward with updating a comprehensive plan and a follow up action plan to move strategic priorities forward. A scope of work proposal was received and discussed as the primary agenda topic with the Eunice ED Committee. The meeting was well attended and the bias for moving forward is very strong by Eunice Leadership.

As of March 10th the St. Landry Professionals have launched a new brand identity to reflect its progression, character and presence. Eunice, La, we are pleased to announce that we have partnered with the LSUE Student Government Association to share booth space for the advertisement of organization and recruitment purposes as well. The next regularly scheduled SLP Executive Leadership meeting will be held on March 20, 2015 where the agenda will consist primarily of finalizations as it relates to our launch event as well as outlining coordinating efforts for our Membership Committee meeting to be held in the latter part of April 2015. Brandy will be making a short presentation on the latest updates with SLP.

We continue to provide attendance and support to the Steamboat City Association in Washington to work on various community development initiatives. We had a very supportive meeting with the new Distribution Center Leadership on moving forward a project that could be used in helping to connect career opportunities for persons in their communities that have some kind of challenge to employment. There have also been very positive developments in using one of their historic buildings as artist studios.

With the help of some of our board, we have provided well received development updates this month to members of the communities in the northeast portion of the parish through the Big Cane Church.

Downtown Opelousas is still moving forward with infill development. New traffic signal light pole installations are currently underway for ten intersections in the City of Opelousas which includes seven that will feature painted black poles and arm masts around the downtown historic district area. The three other intersections will feature galvanized poles and hardware.

Additional upcoming projects include downtown curb enhancement work through a Louisiana Transportation Alternative Program grant, way-finding signage work for the historic district area, historic plaques for some of the buildings located in the city's National Historic District, which is the two block area around the Courthouse Square and proposed new street signs for the city's historic district areas.

Another positive; a landmark neon sign in downtown Opelousas is shining again. The Palace Cafe, one of the oldest operating restaurants in town, was able to restore the sign thanks to a Redevelopment Incentive Grant through the Louisiana Main Street Program.

A \$25,000 LBIA Grant to be used for the Business Center at an 80/20 match. The total grant application for this grant is \$30,355 due to the match requirement.

USDA RBEG Grant; by the Delta Regional Authority was approved and funded by USDA Rural Development, National Office, Washington, D.C., contingent upon change of ownership of the business center. The funds from this grant are contingent on the change of ownership of the Business Center, but are still obligated for use. This is subject to short change on deobligation.

We continue to work closely with the SCPDD on the potential for grant funding for rail upgrades designed to support Project Roto, Project Mat, Project Crude, Project Amber.

We have completed the EDA 70/30 grant application to provide utility infrastructure development suitable for Project Outpost (B) plus additional development capacity at the site. This grant was submitted on March 11th. We anticipate feedback in the next 30 to 40 days.

VII – Training Opportunities

The following are the closest proximity basic economic development training courses remaining for 2015. Brandy will be providing a brief summary of her basic course training.

Mid-South Basic Economic Development Course, Mar 30 - April 2, 2015
Location: Little Rock, AR

True South Basic Economic Development Course, Sept 21 - 24, 2015
Location: Hattiesburg, MS

VIII – Conclusion

We all know that there are concerns on the minds of many people with the oil industry and its potential impact on the Acadiana Region, as well as the impact of the state budget in broad scope, there is also a need for us to be the “Can Do” voice for the Parish. It is apparent in many ways that this is becoming more broadly known. We are now being known as one of the most progressive and cooperative parishes in Acadiana from the 1 Acadiana and Acadiana Planning Commission perspectives. I personally want to thank all of you for being such an integral part of making good things happen for other people! With your support we will dramatically expand opportunities, growth, and positive impact across St Landry Parish throughout this year and beyond!!