



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**

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 work on the upgrades of the A/C to the north side of the building is nearing final completion now. 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. We also have computer systems upgrades being completed under the grant, as well as proposal to upgrade the sound system in the community and business education area.

Great news! We have received the final audit of the GOEIDC funds associated with the OCD Loan/Grant for this building. This concludes our deliverables to OCD in entirety. Part of the processing remaining on our internal action items will be included as a line items on this month's agenda. Once the final process 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 April 1<sup>st</sup> we have the following businesses/spaces being occupied.

C&C Painting and Pressure Washing

Excellent Drivers Academy

Boone Speech and Learning Services

Miracle Ear

Eckerd Youth Alternatives (3 Spaces) May 1<sup>st</sup> Notice

Happy Housemaids

Magnolia Community Development Corporation

Victory Manufacturing (Potential May 1<sup>st</sup>)

L&Z Medical Technology LLC (Potential May 1<sup>st</sup>)

## **II – Communications**

Our Economic Development Specialist 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](http://www.opportunitystlandry.com).

In our committed efforts to taking a leadership role in enhancing the image of the parish to both internal and external stakeholders talks have began amongst high-level educational stakeholders in which SLED's website would provide a core tool for a web communications program that will promote the “good” stories within St Landry Education. The perception of a quality education within any given area is always a key consideration to not only existing and prospective families, but also to existing and prospective businesses. As a quick action follow-on to this very positive meeting there will be a professionally facilitated strategic planning session with all key stakeholders that is being hosted at the SLP School Board Offices.

Our Economic Development Specialist 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.

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. We anticipate having proposals prepared for presentation at the next regular board meeting

We are also working with key parish stakeholders on defining the scope of a parish public relations effort that identifies high level messages and strategically maps out some of the key priority areas for initial focus. The education initiative is a part of this strategy process.

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

We continue, along with other key stakeholders and leaders on outreach and incentive structuring along our major transportation corridors. This effort will tie into the agenda item of policy on taxing districts. With having active projects being discussed at 4 major interchanges on the I-49 corridor our consideration towards support in this development continues to become more pressing. It is also worth noting that all the interchanges on the I-49 that are be worked on will also have an enhanced scope of development beyond the specific project that is being listed. Essentially, 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 the newly formed team of 1 Acadiana into the process of site certification. The details of the merger of 1 Acadiana and AEDC has slowed this progress down some, but in the big picture we should be able to put much more significant resources behind this effort through 1 Acadiana. Still, our biggest challenge will not just be identifying quality sites, but finding property owners, or ownership groups that are willingly to consider a sale.

#### **IV Projects Update**

**Summary: 20 Active, 2 New (Lift, Lot) 6 Announced, 1 Parked (Prairie), 2 Pending Park, (Pacific, Service)**

**Project Amber** – This project is contingent on some rail upgrades in the Opelousas Industrial Park. It is part of the picture of a rail master plan in the Opelousas Industrial Park, which has multiple partners at the table at this time. 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. Although there have been some delays because of infrastructure we expect a definite direction on this project in the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 and informal negotiations continue with numerous property owners. The executive team is willing to move quickly if the right property can be acquired. If successful the project could create up to 20 full time positions.

**Project Lynx (Formally Cloak)** – There continues to be very positive developments and discussions with key players through a recently conducted site visit to the Parish, as well as the project moving through its permitting process. It is possible that an announcement on this project could come in the next 30 45 days although with all the moving pieces that it not guaranteed. 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 is part of the overall rail transportation plan within the Opelousas. The project is also somewhat dependent on the crude oil market depending on the timing of the rail upgrades so the final time frame is still in question. This project could potentially create in excess of 12 direct full time positions

**Project Expo** – One of the recent primary focuses of this project has been putting together the voting commissioners for the district. The final round of interviews by the working committee will be held on this Tuesday the 21<sup>st</sup> and the finalists will then be recommend to Vision St Landry LLC for final appointment nominations to the appointing authorities. A significant additional consideration for project expo will be a line item on the regular agenda.

**Project Focus** – This is a large scope project dealing with historic properties in the center and northern parts of the parish. This project is primarily event driven so the number of jobs created would vary and some of the positions would be good pay, but only part time by project. Some changes in municipal leadership positions may help to give this project some additional momentum. The next 30 to 60 days should prove this theory with the new leadership and determine if this effort moves forward.

**Project Fountain** – This is a large scale commercial development project that discussions have been ongoing for some time. There have been numerous and very positive high level meetings over the past month with this project. A master plan for the project is conceptually in place and some important meetings are scheduled for late this month to discuss some of the details with property ownership and incentive structuring. This project, if successful, could have a legacy impact on the parish, as well as the region, through 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 60 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 Lift** - This is a recruitment project looking to put new rotary wing operations into the parish. All indications of the project are very positive and assuming no unforeseen complications arise we would anticipate and announcement on this project in the upcoming weeks. If successful this project will likely create 12 – 15 positions.

**Project Lot** – 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. The property for expansion is now under contract and due diligence is now underway. Assuming the existing facility backfills the same number of positions in its new use this project would create 45 new full time positions. The existing location now has approximately 25 full time positions.

**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. This is yet again another project that is going to rely heavily on the rail transportation plan for Opelousas Industrial Park. This project is also suspect to the disposition of drilling activities. 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 next 30 – 60 days. If successful, this project could create in excess of 55 direct full time positions and construction will likely commence this calendar year.

**Project Outpost (A)** - The national tenant is in under contract and in the due diligence stage on one site located on Hwy 190. The due diligence on this project is now working on the details of a drainage plan. 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 25 - 30 direct full time positions.

**Project Outpost (B)** This national tenant has entered into a purchase contract agreement on a 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 40 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. The ability of this project to gain traction by the persons involved seems to have faded considerably and pending some unexpected momentum this project will be pending park status. 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 current bias on this project by company executives is that there will not likely be any real estate expansions in the near term. Pending any new developments over the next 30 days this project is now in pending park status. If successful, this project could create up to 11 full time positions.

**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. The project is now waiting a final decision from the national executive team. We anticipate knowing a final intent within the next 30 – 40 days. 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 and support getting established in this area with high demand labor force. We are also

looking at the potential to provide initial support to this project through the lease of the warehouse area in the business center. The final potential for this project should become clear over the next 30 days.

**Project Shield** – Company executives continue to work through options for their head quarters relocation. To date, we have not been able to secure availability to the “right” piece of property with the required transportation access. We anticipate a sit down with their executive team in the next 2 weeks to present what appears to be a final option for a site within the parish. 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 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:**

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. We continue to explore options to find effective ways to partner on key initiatives that can impact one of our most important industries in this parish. As a reminder, agriculture has in excess of 140 million per year impact in SLP and for every dollar earned within the parish in the agricultural industry there is a 3x turnover on this dollar. This puts agricultures impact 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 did a great job in helping them to set up Annual Banquet, which boasted one of the highest attendances on record. As part of this collaboration SLED sponsored an entrepreneur and community engagement award to Don's Car Care and Automotive Center and Washington Bank. Our overall collaborative objective continues to be 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. 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 also continue to regularly collaborate on regional and state priorities important to the cultural economy of SLP.

We are working closely with several key parish agencies at brining 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. The intent is to be able to discuss economic developments intent, investment, and involvement at our next board meeting in May.

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

- Wal-Mart Distribution Center
- Alon Refinery Krotz Springs
- Savoie's
- Tony Chachere's
- Bayou State Lumber
- Cal- Chlor



- Riceland Crawfish
- International Snubbing Services (ISS)
- Sunland Construction
- Ventura Foods

Brandy has had initial training on the Synchronist Database Program to input company visit data. We are also using the Smart Sheet online data base program to ensure we capture outreach visits at the parish level while decisions are still being made with State Economic Development and 1 Acadiana tools.

There have been multiple positive meetings with the Chancellor of SLCC and the SLCC Foundation. Our focus is how we along with other parish partners, could collectively work towards successful outcomes for their strategic priorities. We will also be promoting an annual scholarship once again through funding provided by GOEIDC.

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. The formal date for the current Chancellor to retire is July 1<sup>st</sup>.

Through GOEIDC proceeds we will be supporting an Annual Economic Development scholarship to the LSU-E foundation. We will also have seven students from their leadership development program at this month's Industrial board meeting.

We continue to hold regular meetings/conference calls and direct meetings with the Parish President, Parish Tourism and the Chamber of Commerce, as well as other key stakeholders, to identify priorities that can be worked on by Cornerstone Governmental Affairs in this legislative 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 prior to the 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 efforts in bringing Chamber of Commerce's and related entities to the table as an important voice of a regional economic and community development efforts.

*AEDC (Acadiana Economic Development Council/1 Acadiana Update):*

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 on a 5 year commitment

Officially branded as 1 Acadiana

Hiring of a regional business development executive

Hiring of a regional redevelopment executive

Extensive work is ongoing for a transition plan to incorporate the work and staff of AEDC into the 1 Acadiana efforts while still formally capturing the input from each independent economic development organization in Acadiana.

We as SLED have also provided direct support to the regional value through multiple collaborative radio spots at stations in Lafayette.

Collectively as regional economic development we have been active in participating in and following the priorities for Louisiana Association of Business and Industry, (LABI) and their priorities in this legislative session. Their priorities for business 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**

Several weeks ago 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. As a result of these efforts we participated this week in an inaugural steering committee session that helped to provide the working process for the consultant group. Work on this project is intended to be complete by July 15<sup>th</sup> of this year.

We are reaching out 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. One of the items on this month's agenda, the policy on taxing district support, is a direct result of these discussions.

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. While there have been some temporary setbacks within the decision making authorities we will continue to offer leadership any assistance possible to move forward in a proactive manner.

The St. Landry Professionals Executive Leadership Team have made tremendous strides since the latter part of March and into early April. Documentation has been successfully submitted to receive 501(c)(3) status along with a now fully functioning website providing secured calendar events which include Coffee with Mayor Tatum and a professional development training opportunity on duties and responsibilities as elected commissioner and/or public official and SLP Newsletter distribution. Our official Membership meeting will be held on Thursday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> at 5:30 p.m. on the campus of SLED, where large attendance is expected through our current list of RSVP where membership fees will be collected. The theme for Thursday's event is *Let's Develop St. Landry Parish* through business networking, civic opportunities and professional development.

We continue to provide attendance and support to the Steamboat City Association in Washington to work on various community development initiatives. The Dejean Church, located near the corner of Veterans Memorial and Church Street will soon be home to an art gallery. The Historic Washington Art Gallery will operate as a subsidiary of the Steamboat Association with its purpose as "to promote culture and to advance the study and appreciation of art in the local community; to provide a venue for artistic works, expression, creativity and personal development and to create an atmosphere for diverse social interaction." At the present time there is a waiting list of artists looking to lease space within the building and are moving toward at least a "soft" opening of the long-discussed art gallery in conjunction with the antique mall event second weekend in April. Lastly, Washington is approaching the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its settlement which will be in year 2020. The theme for the Tricentennial will be "Come Home to Washington." A resolution was recently adopted by the Washington Town Council in support of a Tricentennial theme and contest.

Downtown Opelousas continues to move forward with infill development. New traffic signal light pole installation 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 is nearing completion.

Additional upcoming projects include downtown curb and sidewalk 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. Various considerations for these aesthetic improvements are being evaluated at this time.

As a reminder, another positive downtown; 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.

The City of Opelousas is in the planning stages to launch a citywide youth soccer program as envisioned within the City of Opelousas Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The complex will be located on Cherry Street to include multiple playing fields for ages U-6 through U-10 respectively. Funding has been made available to jump start the program through grant dollars which will be used for equipment and ground maintenance, however at the present time the biggest challenge is securing individuals equipped with sound knowledge of the sport to assist as coaches and for training purposes. Our Economic Development Specialist, due to her collegiate soccer experience, has been working closely with Opelousas Parks and Recreation as well as the committee chairman, Yvonne Normand on presenting best practices as it relates to league design and coordination. The committee chair anticipates the first season to begin in spring of 2016.

#### **Grants Update:**

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. We are currently nearing the 80% mark on grant expenditures used to date

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. The key with this grant is going to be the rail master plan for the Opelousas Industrial Park, which Morgan Godeau and Associates is currently working on. It is important that any upgrades meet the long term needs of the park and the area rather than just being reactive to situations as they arise.

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 11<sup>th</sup>. We anticipate feedback in the next 10 days.

## **VII – Training Opportunities**

The following are the closest proximity basic economic development training courses remaining for 2015.

True South Basic Economic Development Course, Sept 21 - 24, 2015

Location: Hattiesburg, MS

## **VIII – Conclusion**

There are many factors that could cause concern for the Acadiana Economy in the minds of many people over the near term. Not the least of which is the current downturn in the oil industry and its potential impact on this area, as well as the impact of the state budget in broad scope. Our legislators have their work cut out for them in one of the most challenging state budget scenarios present in recent memory. While we need to understand the potential ramifications of these factors it may be more important than ever for us to be the “Can Do” voice for the Parish and to continue to take a leading role in the Acadiana Economy. 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!!