



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**

The Business Center continues to be a resource for meetings with the ULL SBDC and businesses throughout the parish. It has also being formally used for board meetings of the new Event Center Joint Commission, SLP Moving Forward Leadership meetings, as well as broad variety of coordination meetings for various parish wide initiatives.

Work within the Business Center on items related to the \$25,000 FY2015 LBIA Grant Award has been completed and full reimbursement on all grant items has been received.

The \$25,000 FY2016 LED/LBIA Grant Application was received on Friday, August 7<sup>th</sup> for application submittal. SLED submitted a complete application on Monday, August 10<sup>th</sup> for improvements/upgrades to the building which include:

- Construction of additional office spaces in the current kitchen area to include outside windows.
- Upgrading rear area lavatory to ADA compliance and closing in the surrounding area.
- Insulating and finishing off the ground floor and 2nd floor storage areas in the rear of the Business Center.
- Laptop display upgrades
- Insulating all the attic space above the main offices area and resealing all a/c ductwork.

The ownership of the Business Center has been legally transferred from GOEIDC to SLED with the Record of Sale recording receipt taken place on August 4, 2015. The property official belongs to SLED free and clear.

We have the following tenant activity at the Business Center:

As of August 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

Happy Housemaids

Magnolia Community Development Corporation

Victory Manufacturing (Spin)

## **II – Communications**

We continue to explore and work on ways to further enhance the brand image of SLED and SLP by refining our overall progressive image through [www.opportunitystlandry.com](http://www.opportunitystlandry.com) and further on how we can combine this with the positive look and feel of [www.SLPforward.com](http://www.SLPforward.com), as well as with our new GIS Portal upgrades.

The “*We’re Moving Forward*” St. Landry Parish Branding Campaign comprised of key entities across the parish, joining collaboratively on a unified front to promote positive story telling throughout the parish continues to gain momentum. Signage has been created displaying collective logo design(s) of all participating partners to be placed throughout the parish on major infrastructure roadways, local signage available within the parish and at designated hotspots where positive articles are birthed.

[www.slpforward.com](http://www.slpforward.com), the website established for campaign purposes, is currently activated for your review with a coming soon message to be officially active in alignment with the public relations press release event, scheduled for August 27<sup>th</sup> at 10 am on the campus of SLED. An invitation guest list made up of 90 to 100 individuals will be sent out requesting their attendance at the campaign unveiling.

Jim Bradshaw, content writer, has a minimum of twelve (12) articles on his waiting list which will be written and made available over the course of the next two (2) months which has been provided to him via stakeholder participation.

Our continuing efforts for completion of a GIS platform are ongoing and will be incorporated into SLED’s web. Again, this initiative will be a growing collaborative effort with some of the key entities forming the “face” of SLP efforts, which would be above any efforts already done at the regional level for GIS.

We are still exploring technical options for implementation of a social media, “wiki” style updating systems and other progressive tools that can enhance our “progressive” web presence.

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

Significant work has gone on this month on using taxing districts as a means to help communities upgrade infrastructure capacity along the major I-49 exits. The communities of Grand Coteau, Port Barre, and Opelousas have all been in of part of these discussions on how these kinds of tools can be used to generate funds for infrastructure. We currently have active development project plans underway at three of the major interchanges on the I-49 corridor. Each of these developments incorporates a

large development creating numerous new business opportunities. We have additional discussions underway with two major land owners at two additional interstate exits.

Site development efforts with LED, as well as the newly formed team of 1 Acadiana have ramped up considerably with the additional support offered by the new 1 Acadiana structure. We are optimistic that this additional support with more targeted emphasis will help in not only identifying quality sites, but finding property owners, or ownership groups that are willing to consider a sale, or an option to sell. The larger focus under either condition is to develop industrial sites in the parish to a “shovel ready” status with the support of the LED Site Development Program.

#### **IV Projects Update**

**Summary: 17 Active, 7 Announced, 1 New (End Termination), 3 Pending Announcement, (Bayou, Spin, Lid) 1 Pending Park (Outpost B) 1 Parked (Shield)**

**Project Amber** – This project is continues hang on pending the potential rail upgrades in the Opelousas Industrial Park. It is part of the picture of a rail master plan, which has multiple partners in discussion as part of the ongoing planning process. 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 continuing their due diligence process now. The property being considered was recently approved for annexation, which was an essential step. This project is moving forward and should part of the early roll out of the parish branding campaign and announce in a matter weeks. 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. The challenge with this project continues to be site location along the I-49 Corridor. The executive team of the organization is willing to move quickly if the right property can be acquired. If successful the project could create up to 20 additional full time positions.

**Project Crude** – There were site location meetings with this project held on 19<sup>th</sup> of May. While the project is somewhat dependent on the crude oil market this corporate leadership is still looking for ways to move forward and SLP still has one possibly two potential sites for this recruitment. Direction on this project is late 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2015 at the soonest. This project could potentially create in excess of 12 direct full time positions

**Project End Termination** – This was a general RFP by LED that was submitted by our team through the team at One Acadiana. This project is in the initial stages that if successful would create 20-30 net new direct job. We do not anticipate the short list for this project being announced until Oct. 2015.

**Project Lynx (Formally Cloak)** – There continues to be very positive developments and discussions with top level corporate officials representing this project. This is a very large project that would be done in phases. Information on the initial phases could be

available for release very soon. This project could potentially create in excess of 60 direct full time positions, but could potentially have an unprecedented economic impact in the parish through capital investment and follow-on jobs created in additional phases.

**Project Expo** – An update on some of the high level activities associate with this project will be provided for on the regular board meeting agenda related to this project and the property for the event Center.

**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 as there a properties within the downtown area that could be a good fit for this project.

**Project Fountain** – This is a large scale commercial development project that discussions have been ongoing for some time. A master plan for the project is conceptually in place and there is now a formal contract letter of intent in place with the key partners, which is a big step. 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. There is the potential for some key contractual progress with his project over the next two weeks. This is a large project that would be developed over time.

**Project Lid** – This project is a manufacturer looking to locate along one of our key transportation corridors. The company closed on their purchase agreement on property on Friday 08/14. Barring any unforeseen setbacks this project could announce in the next several weeks and be an initial part of the parish branding campaign. 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.

**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 this site has been closed on and under the current schedule, the project would go into construction in late October 2015. 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. We anticipate an announcement on this project within the next several weeks as part of the parish branding campaign.

**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. It is also important to note this project is impacted by drilling activities, which timing will bear out with the schedule of rail upgrades vs. the current oil/gas market. 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. The project continues to work through, contracting and due diligence. There should be a definite direction in the early 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2015. 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 company is in its final stages of due diligence. All indications are that the project will move forward. 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. This project will rely in part on the use of the increment finance policy. 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. Due to flood plain mitigation concerns that cannot not be resolved from a cost perspective this project is currently pending park status.

**Project Slip** – This project deals with a major effort with a regional employer who is looking to further expand their transportation/distribution footprint in St Landry Parish. The project is now in its final stages and although delayed, we now anticipate some final word in the next 30 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. This project will formally announce as a start up in the business center in the next several weeks and will be part of the early content of the parish branding campaign.

## **Announced Projects**

**Project Lift – Announced Recruitment** - This project was formally announced over the weekend. The company Air Evac Lifeteam 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, 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:**

Collaboration efforts with the St. Landry Chamber of Commerce board are moving forward at multiple levels. We are exploring in detail the potential for additional formal collaboration in order to collectively be able to create greater value for SLP businesses. This collaboration was recently evident in the capital outlay strategy meeting.

Our work with SLP Tourism also continues to move forward. 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, both through our Cornerstone collaboration, as well as other areas, such as the Parish GIS Project.

Multiple BERG collaboration meetings have been held over the past five months with the following SLP 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 .
- Dominique Stock Yards
- Dixie Storage
- Noble Plastics
- Sterling Automotive Group
- Giles Automotive Group

As part of our regional economic development support we recently worked with One Acadiana for the first of a four part public relations initiative focused on "Priorities for a Better Acadiana." This event was hosted at the Noble Plastics Grand Coteau location. Some of the regional priorities discussed at the press conference included:

- Maintaining strong executive leadership and financial support for LED, including a high caliber staff capable of instilling credibility with business prospects and advancing a strategic vision.
- Continuing to be proactive in pursuing industry development through both business retention and expansion efforts focused on our state's existing industry base, as well as attracting new growth industries to our state.
- Restoring, protecting, and reforming key economic development incentive programs. Specifically looking at some of the recently cut economic development programs that are instrumental in bringing new jobs and investment to Louisiana and in turn producing a net tax benefit such as:



- Digital Interactive Media and Software Development Incentive
- Quality Jobs
- Research and Development Tax Credit
- Competitive Projects Payroll Incentive programs
- Supporting game-changing opportunities, including enhanced international activities.

We continue to actively participate on the advisory committee for a major United Way Effort economic analysis project called The ALICE Project. It is our hope this comprehensive research effort will help provide some critical answers on key workforce issues due to underlying societal issues that may not always be apparent and perhaps open the door to being able to provide more detailed economic grant related data.

We held a strategic planning session this month with the entire team from Cornerstone Governmental Affairs, SLED, SLP Government, SLP Tourism, SLP CHOC, and SLP Solid Waste on funding priorities for the 2016 Capital Outlay Session.

We are moving forward with active participation in multiple areas with the newly formed Acadiana Planning Commission, APC. The Metropolitan Planning Organization, MPO has physically been moved into the APC facility located off of Gloria Switch Road. This is already paying big dividends in the planning staff capacity within APC and their support of SLP.

Our work has also continued over this past month with the ARA (Acadiana Regional Alliance) which is an additional component of the 1 Acadiana effort to bring a collective voice together to enhance regional economic and community development efforts. Some of the key items of consideration at the board meeting this month have were:

- The LED Economic Gardening Program
- The LED Small and Emerging Business Development Program
- The Hudson/Veterans Initiative
- The EnergyX Program

*AEDC (Acadiana Economic Development Council)*

In concert with the One Acadiana Initiative, the AEDC board will remain intact for the near term. Our most recent discussions have been on using some targeted legislative dollars for an exciting regional business accelerator program that would be cooperative initiative with InnoV8 Acadiana, seven parish economic development organizations, and Winrock International.

We continue quality interaction on multiple levels with the staff at OA as we look to enhance the economic development capacity for region. The One Acadiana “Priorities for a Better Acadiana” include:

- Completing I-49 South and accelerating planning of regional transportation projects.
- Unlocking Acadiana's workforce development by investing in the region's higher learning institutions
- Protecting and advancing gains in pre-K through 12 public education.
- Accelerating Acadiana's economic development momentum

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

Ardyn Co has completed a business plan that focuses on the Cultural Economy of Arnaudville with an emphasis on the alternative usage of St Luke's Hospital. The steering committee for this project, which we are a part of, met again last week to determine next steps. The next step in this project is to come to a formal agreement through a meeting with both parish presidents on legal options available with ownership, etc. We are scheduled to have this meeting on Wednesday August 19<sup>th</sup>

We continue to provide attendance and support to the Steamboat City Association in Washington to work on various community development initiatives. In addition to the Dejean Church, located near the corner of Veterans Memorial and Church Street which now serves as the Historic Washington Art Gallery. It has recently began to turn a profit, which has allowed the association to shift efforts to its next priority.

The association will now be looking at housing rehabilitation as a major focus. President, Jim Bradshaw has been in contact with the organization known as Rebuild America to establish connections which will be beneficial in establishing a potential partnership moving forward. There is an active chapter in St. Landry Parish, while although fairly new Mr. Bradshaw sees great potential in overcoming the housing issues throughout Washington, La.

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.

Opelousas has also been selected as one of only four mainstreet communities in Louisiana to be part of a pilot program with LED and State Main Street that is designed to help downtown businesses succeed. We anticipate the inaugural meeting of this program to commence later this month.

The LSU Board of Advisors have officially made their selection for the new LSU-E Chancellor, Dr. Kimberly Russell, who will officially assume her new role effective September 1<sup>st</sup>. Dr. Renee Robichaux is now serving as the interim chancellor. Dr. Russell's background suggests that these are going to be exciting times for the University under her leadership.

Through GOEIDC proceeds SLED will be supporting an Annual Economic Development scholarship to the LSU-E foundation. We are also continuing to actively support their leadership development program and have had solid discussion this month on moving this forward to a broader scope for next year.

An additional Annual Economic Development Scholarship created through GOEIDC and offered on behalf of SLED is being offered to another SLP Student to attend the SLCC TH Harris Campus. She will be formally awarded this scholarship later this month.

We are continuing to prioritize the work with our Mayor's, as well as their councils throughout the parish in order to identify their priorities and how we can provide support on these priorities. We have had these meetings with Eunice, Grand Coteau, Port Barre and Sunset over this past month.

We continue to work with the leadership in Eunice on moving forward with updating a comprehensive plan and a follow up action plan to move strategic priorities forward. This month we collaborated with the APC on a new pilot program that will be available to only five communities in Acadiana to allow them direct low cost planning assistance.

We have had collaboration meeting this month with Junior Achievement of Acadiana on finding ways to establish some of their core programs within the education environment in SLP and are optimistic in holding follow on sessions with the vocational schools on the potential fit.

We had additional follow on meetings this month with the Wal-Mart DC executive team with community leaders from Washington on the potential for using the Wal-Mart Mentor Program for the small communities in the proximity of the DC.

The St. Landry Professionals will host its monthly Membership Meeting the evening of August 26th at 5:30 p.m. at the St. Landry Parish Tourist Commission. A special presentation by SLED and Parish Tourism on their new joint effort branding campaign for St Landry Parish will be provided which will further engage diverse demographics throughout the parish allowing for a greater voice regarding positive perception of our area. Moreover, SLP has recently applied for a \$2,500.00 grant through the Wal-Mart Foundation with the grant objective of strengthening local communities. If awarded funding, those dollars will be used to advise future young professionals selected from our parish-wide education system providing hands on mentorship. In closing, SLP membership continues to grow, attracting the up and coming leaders from our parish dedicated to positive progression and smart growth.

Our team continues to work with the City of Opelousas through the implementation stages of a city wide youth soccer program as envisioned within the City of Opelousas Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The committee chair anticipates the first season to begin in spring of 2016.

### **Grants Update:**

We have formally submitted the FY2016 LBIA \$25,000 Grant and are optimistic in receiving funding for the upcoming grant funding cycle.

USDA RBEG Grant; by the Delta Regional Authority was approved and funded by USDA Rural Development, National Office, Washington, D.C. We are working on some final updates on identified ADA compliance items in the building and anticipate these changes being complete and the funds released over the next several weeks.

We continue to work closely with the SCPDD/ARA and now the MPO 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 are further exploring capital outlay requests that would provide planning expertise on tying the park into the SLP Airport and then to the interstate in a true “intermodal” plan.

We anticipate using the new Increment Finance Policy over the near term to help communities along the I-49 Corridor. The use of these funds to enhance transportation infrastructure along the corridor will be strong area of near term focus as we look to capitalize on the I-49 potential. Grand Coteau is scheduled to begin the formal adoption process at the September general council meeting.

### **VII – Training Opportunities**

Brandy recently attended and successfully completed the Real Estate Development and Reuse two-day session as a course requirement under the Certified Louisiana Economic Development. This course provided the eight stage process for real estate development and reuse. Specifically, the fundamentals of market and site analysis, financial feasibility, and what political considerations are required to move a development project from conception to realization.

This course went into detail on the understanding of the process to solicit and select a developer, a wide variety of financing tools that are available at the local, regional, and state levels, including tax increment financing, bond financing, tax credits, tax

abatements, land assembly, and brownfield redevelopment. Multiple in-class case studies were completed to work through actual financial and regulatory problems for a hands-on understanding.

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 current economic factors that continue to cause concern for the Acadiana Economy in the minds of many people. People in this parish and around the region will continue to look to us to be a leader in being the “Can Do” voice. As our new branding campaign will show, there is lot to be proud of in SLP and a lot more coming that we can all be proud of. I personally want to thank all of you for being such an integral part of making good things happen for other people and helping to grow the capacity of our organization, as well as our parish. With your support we will dramatically expand opportunities, growth, and positive impact across St Landry Parish throughout the second half of this year and beyond!!