



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**

### Table of Contents

I	–	Business Center/Small Business Update
II	–	Communications
III	–	Property Development
IV	–	Projects
V	–	Area and Regional Development Items
VI	–	Community Development
VI	–	Training Opportunities
VIII	–	Conclusion

## **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 been formally used for board meetings of the new Event Center Joint Commission, SLP Moving Forward Leadership meetings, as well as a broad variety of coordination meetings for various parish wide initiatives.

On September 29<sup>th</sup> through our collaborative partnership with ULL SBDC, a seminar was conducted on the campus of SLED designed for those desiring to learn how to create a comprehensive business plan upon which to build a new business. The course was well attended. The next scheduled workshop is tentatively scheduled to be conducted during the first quarter of 2016 centered on Starting and Financing a Small Business.

We are also working currently with a group of stakeholders to hold ongoing business education seminars on topics relevant to their daily operations and profitability. We anticipate the first of these classes being scheduled in early December.

Action items completed under the recently awarded FY2016 LED/LBIA Grant for improvements/upgrades to the building include:

- Construction and completion of additional office space from previous break room area.
- Construction and completion of previous break room area entrance way.
- Construction and upgrade completion of back area bathroom regarding ADA compliance.
- Construction and facelift completion to back office entrance area.
- Construction and completion to Board Room back wall area.
- Conversion and completion to storage unit (A) located in warehouse area to a climate controlled storage unit.

We have the following tenant activity at the Business Center:

As of September 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 since announced continues to gain momentum parish-wide and beyond. Signage promoting the good news can be seen throughout the parish. In addition to the signs at “good news sites” a new-look billboard of the campaign can be seen on I-49 South of Opelousas beginning on October 21<sup>st</sup> as well as in Lafayette Parish on the corner of Johnston Street and Guilbeau Road effective October 19<sup>th</sup>.

[www.slpforward.com](http://www.slpforward.com), the website established for campaign purposes, is currently live providing a total of nineteen (19) articles shining the light on positive things happening throughout St. Landry Parish. One (1) article per week is uploaded onto the site on a consistent basis providing fresh and updated article content.

Jim Bradshaw, content writer, lacking no shortage of article material continues to reach out to our major stakeholders throughout the parish for fresh and new material maintaining stakeholder participation and engagement.

Our continuing efforts for completion of a GIS platform are ongoing and will be incorporated into SLED’s web. Fenstermaker has provided the first draft of the site ready mapping tool which includes all listed properties available for St. Landry Parish that is currently under review. Prior to our next board member a finalized site map should be available for SLED website inclusion. 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.

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

Significant work continues 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, Washington, 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 continue to work active development project at four of the major interchanges on the I-49 corridor. Each of these developments incorporates a large development creating numerous new business opportunities.

Site development efforts with the newly formed team of 1 Acadiana continue to get added priority emphasis. 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. This fits one of the key economic development priorities for One Acadiana, which is actively pursuing industrial development opportunities.

#### **IV Projects Update Summary: 14 Active, 9 Announced, 4 Pending Announcement, (Spin, Slip, Lid, Lot) 2 Parked (Crude, Outpost A)**

**Project Amber** – This project is continues to hang on pending 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 Clean** – This is a manufacturing infill development project located in the center of the parish. There is a lot of optimism on their leadership on this being successful, but the project hinges on some new contracts being negotiated in this geography that are needed to confirm viability. If successful this project could create 25 new direct 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. We have been in discussion over the past several weeks with developers along the corridor that may have suitable available land for this effort. If successful the project could create up to 20 additional 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 jobs. We do not anticipate the short list for this project being announced until late Oct. 2015.

**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. Progress has been very slow, but we are still optimistic that changes in municipal leadership in the middle of the parish may help to give this project some additional momentum, particularly in downtown related properties.

**Project Fountain** – This is a large scale commercial development project that discussions have been ongoing for some time. Negotiations on the original side of I-49 have stalled so we have moved the negotiation to a parcel to the across the interstate. National tenants are committed to this project if land can be secured at a workable figure. This is still a large project that would be developed over time in phases.

**Project Lid** – This project is a manufacturer planning 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 announcement should be forthcoming very soon, along with its inclusion into 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 November 2015. We anticipate a formal announcement on this project along with its inclusion in the parish branding campaign very soon. 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.

**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 and now additional challenges with land acquisition. We hope to have some resolution on the land contract with this project one way, or another in the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter. If successful, this project could create up to 100 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. All indications are that the project will move forward and it should be set to announce very soon. This project will create at least 25 - 30 direct full time positions.

**Project Slip** – This project deals with a major effort with a regional employer who is looking to upgrade their footprint in St Landry Parish. This major upgrade is now underway with the potential to bring up to 2000 temporary construction jobs to the parish over the next 45 days and allow for up to an additional 15 permanent jobs to be created due to the expansion. We are now coordinating with company officials on releasing a public announcement.

**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 is still scheduled to formally announce soon, but is also being hit hard by the downturn in oil and gas.

## **Announced Projects**

**Project Bayou** – This Wal-Mart Neighbor Center projected was announced earlier this month as being an example of highlighting the retail development potential here in the center of the Parish. This project is well into its construction process now and is projecting a formal opening on January 20<sup>th</sup>. This project will create between 90 and 100 direct full time positions. The company had a temporary hiring office set up in the old Daily World Office on Heather Dr. Acadiana Works is providing direct assistance to this company in recruiting and screening potential employment candidates.

**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 Lynx** – This project was formally announced on Sept 30<sup>th</sup>. This project is projected to create 123 direct full time positions, 135 indirect positions and 200 temporary construction related positions. This project also has the potential to lay the framework for significant future development.

**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 will be continuing to work collectively this month on the capital outlay request for the 2016 Legislative Session, as well as other community development related initiatives.

Our work with SLP Tourism also continues to move forward. We 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. We are also working with them now on supporting lodging requirements for a very large construction project. (Project Slip)

Seventeen BERG collaboration meetings have been held over the past six 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
- Opelousas General Health Systems (OGH)
- Waveland Services

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 are continuing efforts with 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. As a reminder, 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. The most recent example is with the MPO currently getting updated traffic counts for us on key transportation areas in the Parish.

We are continuing our active efforts 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 last board meeting were dealing with the recent regional leadership orientation done in Vermillion, St Mary and Iberia Parishes, as well as early planning for an Acadiana Day at the State Capitol.

*AEDC (Acadiana Economic Development Council)*

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. We represented them yesterday in a press conference announcing their economic development priorities for Acadiana, which are:

- Maintaining strong executive leadership and financial support for LED.
- Proactively pursuing industry development for Acadiana.
- Restoring, protecting, and reforming key economic development incentive programs.
- Supporting game changing opportunities.

## **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. This plan was publicly announced last week in the A-Biz magazine. We are now facilitating efforts between Parish Presidents on legal options for valuation and transfer of ownership with the facility.

We continue to provide attendance and support to the Steamboat City Association in Washington to work on various community development initiatives. The association continues to pursue its housing initiative through Rebuild America- St. Landry Chapter with a general emphasis on identifying housing needs for those low-income individuals and families throughout the area over the course of the next year. Additionally, the association is revisiting the idea of engaging community gardens.

Also, time is fast approaching regarding the Steamboat’s Scholarship Selection. Currently applications are under review. It is important to note that this year more applications were received than years past which only further demonstrates the importance this scholarship is and can provide to our youth. In addition to the academic eligibility requirement the scholarship selection committee will also factor in a needs based criteria which they have not done previously to ensure dollars are being provided to those most in need.

Opelousas continues to work on options on downtown curb and sidewalk enhancement work made available through a Louisiana Transportation Alternative Program grant. It also includes 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. .

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 very soon. .

We have spent extensive time with the new Chancellor for LSU-E, Dr. Kimberly Russell, who will officially assumed her new role effective September 1<sup>st</sup>. These discussions have been very productive and we anticipate a growing number of good things through this partnership, including potentially having a designated workforce development position at the University. This position would be focused on meeting the needs of business in the area with the program offerings by the University.

The student for the SLED Annual Economic Development scholarship via GOEIDC has been awarded through the LSU-E foundation. We are also continuing to actively support their leadership development program and will have their fall class in attendance at the November SLED Board Meeting

An additional Annual Economic Development Scholarship created through GOEIDC and offered on behalf of SLED was formally awarded earlier this month to an SLP Student who will be attending the SLCC TH Harris Campus as a business major.

We continue to work with the leadership of Port Barre in their efforts to establish as one of only five communities in Acadiana that will participating in a pilot planning program offered through the Acadiana Planning Commission, APC.

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. Their council approved this month going forward with names to be considered for a planning steering committee. This committee was formally brought together for the 1<sup>st</sup> time last week. We will be providing assistance to the committee by request in order to help identify any resources that would be beneficial to their efforts.

We have had continued discussions with Parish K-12 and the 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 are not giving up on discussions 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 October 21st at 5:30 p.m. at LHC Group located in Opelousas, La. We will discuss finalizations regarding our most recent collaborative endeavor with Girl Scouts of Louisiana – Pines to the Gulf as it relates to two (2) upcoming outreach events.

On October 1<sup>st</sup> the SLP participated in the District 40 & 24 Candidate Forum held at the Delta Grand Theater in Opelousas, La whereas we were provided the opportunity to respectfully ask each candidate one question we felt pertinent for developing this region in the coming years. Lastly, on Friday, October 9<sup>th</sup> the SLP received confirmation from the Walmart Community Grants Team and Facility that our Community Grant

application had been selected to receive a \$2,500.00 grant. These grant dollars will be used for upcoming projects related to identified organizational priorities.

### **Grants Update:**

FY2016 LBIA \$25,000 Grant building improvements have begun as of September 15, 2015. To date a total of seven (7) items have been completed with the remaining five (5) shortly to follow.

USDA RBEG Grant correspondence was received on October 7<sup>th</sup> stating that our grant request for extension of project period through December 2016 due to ADA building compliance upgrades was formally approved. To date, signage for the digital marquee has been ordered and is expected to arrive by month's end with complete construction and installation of signage to be complete by end of November 2015.

We continue to work with the SCPDD/ARA and now the MPO on advancing grant funding for rail upgrades designed to support Project Roto, Project Mat, and Project Amber. The key with this grant is a rail master plan for the Opelousas Industrial Park. Morgan Godeau and Associates is the engineering firm involved with plan. 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 in multiple locations to help communities along the I-49 Corridor. The use of these funds will be 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 formally adopted the first step of this process at the September general council meeting.

## **VII – Training Opportunities**

One Acadiana Charleston Leadership Conference Update.

## **VIII – Conclusion**

There are current economic factors that continue to cause concern for the Acadiana Economy in the minds of many people. A recent presentation by State Economist Loren Scott on the economy of Acadiana for next year shows there are plenty of reasons for concern over the near term with the oil field downturn. Now, as much as ever, people in this parish and around the region will continue to look for leaders to be the “Can Do” voice on moving things forward. As our new branding campaign shows, there is lot to be proud of in SLP and a lot more coming that we can all be proud of. I want you all to know how much I appreciate your support in being such an integral part of making good things happen for other people. With your support we are continuing to grow the capacity of our organization, as well the prosperity of our parish. With your continued support we will continue to expand opportunities, growth, and positive impact across St Landry Parish throughout the last quarter of this year and beyond!!