



Executive Director’s Report — March 2019

Greetings! It is time once again to give a quick high-level monthly summary of the forward momentum in our area and for Acadiana. As a parish, we continue our climb in fundamental indicators, such as sales taxes collections being up again by 9% and housing sales. This continued positive momentum in sales tax is likely due in large part to two primary factors, one is the improved collection efficiency by the Parish Sales Tax Collection Office in combination with a consistent growth in the overall parish economy.



December SLP Sales Taxes Collection Comparisons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$5,191,009 Feb 2019 • \$4,724,384 Feb 2018 • Up 9% month over year

November SLP Unemployment Comparisons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jan 2019 6.7% - Dec 2018 5.8% • Jan 2018 5.9 % • Jan 2017 8.0 % • Jan 2016 8.4%

Each month we try to find some relevant topics of interest that help paint a picture of the economic picture here in St Landry Parish, as well as the Acadiana Region. This month we will taking a closer look at the residential real estate market, specifically in St Landry Parish.

Looking month over year in February, residential sales have seen a 100% increase at 58 sales. In comparison with January of 2019 there has been a 71.43% increase in sales. The dollar volume in homes sold in the parish was just over 7m, which is a 150% increase over the volume in February of 2018. The average sales price of a home in the parish is 147K, which is up by 25% from last year and surely looks like the current sweet spot in the residential price range for the parish market.

While it is difficult to put too much stock in these positive figures for just a couple of months, these are very positive signs. We do not currently have the data tools available to track these sales collectively by geography, but indications are strong that a high percentage of these sales are in the southern half of the parish, which is essentially Highway 190 and south.

While the residential housing market is only a piece of the picture when it comes to leading economic indicators, it is a very important piece that it pays to be aware of as leaders of the area. These figures seem to be consistent with interest we have been receiving by builders looking at project potentials here in St Landry. In previous years we have not had this kind of interest so it will be interesting to watch this residential trend play out over the course of this year.

We also continue to watch the trending data on oil and gas for the area, which as you know have many global factors affecting these markets. A general bias is that 2019 is projected to be a respectable year for investment in offshore production. This could provide contract and growth opportunities for some of our areas offshore support service companies that have been hit particularly hard over the past several years of the industry downturn.

Specifically, in St Landry Parish, Project Vista, if awarded could become a significant catalyst for our areas downstream production industry, which would be complemented by increasing availability of light sweet crude feed stock over the next several years.

We hope these thoughts provide some value and would welcome your thoughts, or additional insights into these areas of conversation. We at SLED and its affiliate entities thank you for all you do and look forward to working with all of you through 2019 to create further positive momentum while building sustainable foundations for future growth.

The SLED Team

Communications

We continue to work with Golden Shovel on improving our website presence by delving into platform features that will enhance our visibility and attraction locally, regionally and worldwide. We participated in our second GateKeeper discussion in February 2019. We are actively working on the inclusion of a complete marketing strategy to include a detailed BRE Program and Workforce Development component to be provided by Golden Shovel and incorporated into SLED's strategic plan. Our next GateKeeper discussion is scheduled for March 27, 2019.

This web strategy will contribute to the overall marketing success and develop pathways for digital marketing, content strategy support, and overall awareness of the goals and objectives. It will also contribute to the development of the product box, which is the community identifier(s) used to attract the target audience.



There have been 113 articles written for this campaign to shine a light on positive things happening in St. Landry Parish. While we are no longer loading articles into the site, we will be including these and future articles into the newly developed opportunitystlandry site, so people can continue to hear more about some of the great things happening in our area.

A GIS database now allows site selectors to search, select and compare sites and has details about key industries and leading employers. Users also can create custom reports.

Each of St. Landry Parish's communities is profiled on the site, which also outlines recreation, education and health care options as well as the area's distinct arts and cultural heritage. Citizens will appreciate that the user-friendly website includes positive business news stories and a government page with up to date information on services and contacts.

Included in this new communications design effort is new board reporting materials, as well as the ability for any visitor to collect portions of the web material into a shopping cart type feature that will build the material into a PDF for save/print.

We are also working on an initiative to further promote outreach through print leader mail outs, electronic newsletters video story telling clips promoting our good news, as well as give the average person a better understanding of what economic development looks like this parish and this region.

Over the next several weeks, we will be working with the leadership of the four different boards in the SLED Group on considerations for bringing in a outside contractor to handle a renewed campaign to take the place of SLPForward. This campaign will put a heavy focus on telling the story of what economic development is along with the significant progress our groups are making around the area. The emphasis of the campaign will be to rely heavily on video production that ties into Opportunity St Landry, as well an aggressive social media campaign effort in venues such as LinkedIn and Facebook.



Twenty-two St. Landry Parish projects announced over the past 40 months have created

- 1,138 new fulltime jobs.
- Retention of 325 existing jobs.
- Creation of at least 369 indirect jobs
- Support of an estimated 4,160 temporary jobs

Who's Growing?

This month will consolidate the projects section into those projects at a 90%, or better rating for completion. In total we 21 projects that we are actively engaged with at this time. Of these 21 we have the following 10 that are at currently at, or close to an imminent development status. FTE stands for full time employee. Capex means money invested in property and equipment. Some of the projects listed below have been at the cusp of announcement for a while. We anticipate most of the projects to have either a soft, or public announcement into the reaming of the first and into the second quarter of 2019. Projects that have been soft announcements are indicated below and include updates to the graph to the left.

Project Anchor – In state expansion, area recruitment. 2.5m capex 35 FTE's (Geaux Bear Development: projected construction completion for first phase is 2nd quarter. Public ceremony tentative late April/May. Not Reflected in count.

- **Project Belt** – Area expansion. 2.1m capex 15 FTE’s (Phased expansion, currently underway, soft announcement Noble Plastic expansion at Opelousas Site) Not reflected in count
- **Project Boost** – Area expansion/retention. 100m capex, 5 FTE’s (High Wage) (Build out to be complete in 2nd Quarter 2019, Coordinating company announcement, included in job count) Delek Refinery
- **Project Clean** – In state expansion, area recruitment. 2.3m capex. 25 growing to 50 FTE’s (Project is now hiring. Working to coordinate timing on a formal announcement) Westport Medical. Not reflected in count.
- **Project Doughnut** – Area recruitment, in state expansion. 3.5m capex, 15FTE’s (2nd quarter public announcement anticipated)
- **Project Drop Off** - Area expansion. 1.5m capex, 10FTE’s Dixie Storage Expansion Project (Construction completed) Not reflected in count
- **Project Gateway** - This is a large multi-use development project in the central parish on a 100-acre site. (Multiple new medical building announcements in 1st quarter) Lily Pad Pediatrics Ground Breaking. Not reflected in count
- **Project Link** – Area expansion. 10.5m capex, 25 FTE’s (Potentially pending local ITEP considerations)
- **Project Ride** – In state expansion, area recruitment 9m capex, 55FTE’s (Currently in construction, Team Honda.) Anticipate late 2nd, early 2rd quarter completion. Part of the Gateway Plaza Project as well. Not reflected in count
- **Project Vista** – Area expansion project, 156.5m Capex, or more, and 47 FTE creation, or more. 1500 temp construction jobs. 200 FTE retained. This has been a high-profile project for our area because of our decision to use ITEP as a tool to help try and solidify this investment. We still do not have final word on the decision to invest here, but there have been very optimistic signs that our site is in a good position. We could have a decision on this project as early as March 28th.
- **Project Wrench** – Area expansion, .9m capex, 12FTE’s (Currently in construction, soft announcement)

Business Outreach

We continue regular outreach to employers throughout our parish having logged 22 visits to improve the quality of relationships with these organizations and their leadership. This list will be updated on a rolling monthly basis. Many of the expansion projects we deal with are initially founded in these outreach visits. We also continue to visit key employers through the past year in regular conversation with on items affecting their growth in the parish.

Area Development

Vision St Landry - has been focused on identifying priorities and providing advocacy on initiatives that will have significant impacts for SLP over the next 5 to 20 years. The group continues to make significant strides with its support for long-terms priorities as well as improving some its internal operating guidelines. Some of its advocacy and support for core areas has included.

- Improving education (SLP District Plan and Efficiency Evaluation) Scholarships for LSUE, 21st Press Conference, SLCC scholarship, March 13th Award Presentation
- Redevelopment of downtowns (Opelousas DDD, Eunice Planning)
- Development of the I-49 Corridor (CSLEDD, GCEDD, Midway, Gateway Plan)
- Building leadership capacity – Vision Member in Training Consideration

Vision St. Landry held its first quarterly meeting of 2019 on February 4th. The board has established an very active working committee that is focused on updating the working by-laws for its meeting in April.

The Central St Landry Economic Development District, CSLEDD - Continues to progress with implementing their 2018 priorities and aggressively moving into 2019. These include:

- Improving wastewater capacities to the north and south

Parish Employer Visits Over Past 12 Months

- Piggly Wiggly Stores
- Delek Refinery
- Wal Mart Distribution Center
- Evangeline Downs
- Dixie Storage
- Savoies Foods
- Gaubert Oil
- Riceland Crawfish
- Acadian Medical Group
- Dupree Carrier Godchaux Insurance
- Opelousas General Hospital
- C&G Container
- Giles Automotive Group
- MANCO Containers
- Prairie Construction
- Design Precast Concrete & Pipe
- Lemoyen Timber
- Gaienne Lumber
- Noble Plastics
- Courville Toyota
- Stage Retail
- Lowes Opelousas

Morgan Goudeau has completed a wastewater infrastructure assess plan for both the north and south sections of the I-49. The plan to the south has been submitted to Office of Community Facility Planning and currently awaiting follow-up for plan approval. We anticipate a plant to the south to be in construction in as soon as 24 months.

- Maintenance of the grounds and trash along the I-49
 - The lawn maintenance and litter abatement schedule for 2019 remains on task. The commission will also receive a reimbursement from the state in excess of \$15,000.00 from the prior DOTD lawn maintenance agreement contract.
- Lighting along the I-49
 - I-49 @ Harry Guilbeau
 - Removed burnt/shorted circuits and reinstalled new conductors in Junction box on bridge.
 - Replaced conductors in Junction box.
 - I-49 @ US 190
 - Removed and replaced burnt/shorted Circuit breaker and lighting contactor in the feeder panel.
 - Changed lamps and Ballast in 4 high mast poles.
 - Located shorted circuit in the field.
 - Removed and replace shorted circuit from a couple of knocked down poles at the second feeder panel.
- Master planning the EVD Property.
 - On March 13th Populous, HR&A, Crossroads and CSRS was on the campus of SLED working on collaborative session which began at 11 am and lasted until 4 pm. Immediately following a working dinner with Boyd Gaming Group was conducted.
 - March 14th Populous along with the three other consultant firms presented at the March 2019 CSLEDD Commission meeting on findings and determined next steps on completion of report. Thereafter, an open house, open to the public, was held throughout the remainder of the day for any questions, input, comments and/or concerns as it relates to the Master Plan.

The Downtown Development District Board (DDD) – Their recent progress includes:

- 1% dedicated sales tax levy went effective January 1st.
- The district had developed a top list of initial priorities.
- The district has launched via social media and by way of a website landing page a Public Education/Outreach Campaign
- Selection of organization CPA firm
- New brand logo has been created and adopted
- The district will soon be in considerations on identifying a consultant team to help formalize a comprehensive downtown corridor development plan

In the Region

One Acadiana - SLED takes an active leadership role in many of the *One Acadiana Committees* and board efforts that focused on various key elements in the region, which include the following committees that provide input to the board structure:

- Regional Transportation Steering/Transportation Committee
- Business Development Committee
- Site Development Committee (2 St Landry, Port Barre, Sites Pending Certification)
- Urban Revitalization Committee
- Workforce and Education Committee
- Governmental Affairs Committee

Acadiana Planning Commission (APC) We regularly engage on a broad range of planning and related efforts that include:

- The I-49 Midway Corridor Project,
- St Luc Hospital Environmental studies,
- Discussion on feasibility for a phase 2 northbound public transportation system on I-49
- The Opportunity Zone Investment Program
- Regional transportation infrastructure priorities
- Community MPO related projects
- Consideration of an Acadiana Region asset mapping project

AEDC, Acadiana Economic Development Council:

Economic development professionals from 7 Parishes focused on making progress on issues that impact all the parishes in Acadiana, particularly in the parishes surrounding Lafayette. This group works to find solutions to common challenges faced by the economic development leaders in Acadiana and host monthly board meetings that facilitate these actions. Currently, the group is assessing the potential for a cooperative regional asset mapping initiative, such as recently been done in Acadia Parish.

Educational Progress

Public K-12 Education: We continue our work with Patrick Jenkins, St Landry Parish Schools Superintendent, his staff and the SLP School Board through many efforts that include:

- Recognizing outstanding career and technical teachers through the district
- Fiscal and committee support of a strategic plan and efficiency analysis for St. Landry Parish Schools by Gibson Consulting.

- Direct supporters of the SLPS JAG Program.
- Active leadership in selecting the students of the year
- Advisory Board of the Bio-Med Academy
- A leadership role in implementing priorities for the district in community and business engagement
- Active attendance in formal district board and related meetings around redistricting
- Providing leadership on establishing a St Landry Parish Education Foundation
- Secured sponsorship for the Junior Achievement financial literacy program that began in January at Opelousas Middle School with JD Banks partnership.



T.H. Harris: The TH Harris enrollment figures were up again in the spring semester. SLCC was recently recognized as a top ten college nationwide for enrollment growth. We continue to work with the TH Harris on:

- The new LPN/RN Program supported SLED has confirmed a fall 2019 targeted launch.
- We have also committed through Vision St Landry for an additional student scholarship for 2018/2019. (Awards presentation was held on March 13th)
- Quarterly meetings with key leadership of SLCC to discuss current needs and standings; next meeting scheduled for Feb 21st.
- Assistance in identifying critical area workforce shortages and proactive educational solutions. TH Harris Career Fair was held on March 14th.
- Working to engage their development teams with employers on vocational and other training needs.

LSU-Eunice: LSU-E continues to increase its enrollment with to increase for the spring with enrollment figures that shows continue to rise with their numbers now over 3300-students. Our engagement includes:

- An active member of the LSUE Board of Advisors
- Leading the effort to have Vision \$10,000 in matching scholarship monies for St Landry Parish students looking to attend LSUE. (Press Announcement on March 21st)
- A lead role in helping to facilitate a Eunice Area Plan that puts LSUE in a pivotal role in the process
- Active member of the LSUE Business Management Advisory Committee
- Providing advocacy through the board of advisors for the new surgical tech campus in the Lafayette General Orthopedic Towers.
- Participating on the search committee for a new LSUE Chancellor. Target date of July 1st to have a new Chancellor in place

Community/Cultural Development

Eunice: Multiple planning efforts and initiatives through effort led through:

- Held a planning session on March 12th for the City that focused on a collective overview of the draft completion of the Eunice Economic Development Strategic Plan.
- The last planning work group session will be held on March 26, 2019 in which top priorities will be identified within the goals outlined throughout plan that can be attainable with 2019.

Opelousas: Multiple planning efforts and initiatives through effort led through:

- Area economic development district, CSLEDD initiatives
- Area economic development district, ODDD initiatives
- Secondary and post-secondary education direct support
- Midway Corridor Project implementation
- Coordination on Opportunity Zone action steps (April 3rd Education Session)

Arnaudville: Multiple efforts associated with the cultural economy including:

- Continued input and guidance on plans for the St Luc Hospital.
- Engaging the LSU School of Art and Design for an area cultural economy plan
- Establishment and management of Creative Placemaking Task Force
- Received revised design for Phase I of the project: "The Sculptural Pathway." This included dimensions and installation under the Hanging Garden placemaking anchor project.
- Provide inputs on quality of life planning initiatives
- Community efforts were featured in the Feb Edition of Southern Lifestyle Magazine

Grand Coteau: Ongoing efforts include:

- Helping prioritize economic development district projects along the business corridor
- Leading progress on a TAP Grant that will provide pedestrian access through the business corridor of the town.
- Promoting efforts for an engineering analysis of roundabout traffic solution for the east frontage road; now in its final approval stage.
- Using our government affair team for capital outlay on the roundabout project
- Working with the town to complete and application for the MPO Project call to help fund a round about
- Promoting and engineering plan for overhead lighting at the Exit 11 interchange
- Working as a liaison with local businesses in construction with DOT to ensure the interests of long-term drainage are in concert with new development

- Leading area cultural economy and place making task force initiatives
- Promotion of the area's first certified shovel ready light industrial site
- Implementation of the Midway Corridor Plan

Sunset: Support of the town through:

- Cooperative employment of our development planner
- Assistance in putting in 2019 Capital Outlay request through our government affairs team
- Numerous areas associated with the cultural economy and the place making task force, including the Old Sunset High School and the Sunset Arena
- Continued promotion of the area's first certified shovel ready light industrial site
- Implementation of the Midway Corridor Plan

Port Barre:

- Establishing the areas first for industrial park with two large sites. The shovel ready light industrial development sites should be announced in the early 2nd quarter of 2019.
- Established boundaries that could be used as an area economic development district
- Early discussions with the new administration on cooperative planning possibilities

Washington:

- Implementation of the Midway Corridor Plan

St Landry Young Professionals, TheSLP

The St. Landry Professionals held its first board meeting of 2019 on February 27th in which Stuart Amidon was appointed as our newest board member. Stuart is the owner of a media production and marketing firm based in Opelousas known as Page50. Page50's mission is to help businesses throughout Acadiana get the brand recognition and local visibility that they need to succeed by helping them tell their stories. We are excited regarding the assets Stuart will bring to our growing organization. Upcoming SLP events include a Millennial geared small business development workshop in collaboration with LSBDC as well as our third annual SLP Works! Job fair. More information forthcoming as those dates are approaching

The Business Center

We have 9 tenants in the Business Center that include

- Boone Speech and Learning Services
- Miracle-Ear
- Magnolia Community Development Corporation
- Victory Manufacturing
- WIOA 40
- Global Environmental Solutions (Storage Only)
- Mind and Body Connections, LLC
- St. Landry – Evangeline United Way
- Infinity Back Ground Chex

The Business Center now has more than 25 employees in working out of the building on a regular basis with hundreds of persons visiting the center in some capacity each month. The center at capacity with new inquiries on space continuing to increase.

We are continuing our work with on-going facility upgrades at the main business center with roof replacement being the biggest improvement project that has been completed. We recently replaced the mother board in for our front sign which is now 100% operational.

The last LSBDC, ULL SBDC counseling session was held on March 12, 2019 and one appointment was held. The next round of sessions is scheduled for April 9th. These services are available to businesses at any level of growth, are confidential, and are free of charge.

Our CAVE area is getting increased usage by area nonprofit, governmental and education partners for planning and presentations by private entities, such a CLECO earlier this month. On average, the room is getting used at least several times per week. The CAVE is also new highlighted on our new website displaying all the technology assets offered. If you know of businesses in the area that could utilize our CAVE area for small retreats, or breakout planning sessions please let us know so we can get them more information on its use.

Grants Update

The 2018-2019 LBIA Grant of \$25,000.00 was dedicated towards the replacement of the business center roof. The first quarterly report has been sent out prior to deadline per the grant requirements with reimbursement funds to be received by the end of March. The second quarterly report is due on March 22, 2019. 2019/2020 request projects are being considered.

We continue partnership work with Grand Coteau on their DOTD TAP Grant designed to address the accessibility and safety of pedestrian transportation in the business district area of Grand Coteau. The town has confirmed their match allocation of 210k to match for 480K. We have meet twice already with their new leadership team on this project.

We continue with local partners TAP Grant for sidewalk improvements around the Courthouse. Currently the preliminary analysis is near completion for the two (2) sidewalks along W. Landry Street between the intersections of S. Market Street and S. Court Street. A final design is to be submitted to DOTD in the 2nd quarter of 2019 by the Cities engineering firm.

In concert with our Government Affairs team we engaged with the Parish and CSLEDD on capital outlay funding for wastewater capacity projects along I-49 as well as the Grolee area. We plan to be in construction of a wastewater treatment facility to the south in 2020.

In 2nd quarter 2018, in collaboration with APC, a RDBG Grant was submitted for assessing the needs of a I-49 Midway Growth Corridor Plan. We received confirmation of grant ward through USDA in the amount of \$30,000.00 on February 14, 2019.

Training Opportunities

SLED is committed to paying the tuition of board members, or a limited number of elected officials in the area to participate in the next basic economic development courses.

The New South Basic Course will be held in Hattiesburg in September of 2019. This course offers overviews in:

- Managing the Economic Development Organization; Ethics in Economic Development; Transportation and Logistics; Real Estate Development and Reuse; Community Development; Understanding Retail; Workforce Development; Marketing and Attraction; Finance /Incentives; Strategic Planning; Small Business & Entrepreneurship

Upcoming Meetings

- Opelousas DDA Board Meeting, 9 a.m. March 22nd, SLED Bldg.
- Central St. Landry EDD Board Meeting, 8 a.m. on April 11th, SLED Bldg.
- Vision St Landry regular board meeting, April 1st, SLED Bldg.