



Executive Director’s Report —February 2019

Greetings and Happy Mardi Gras! 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 being up double digits from December of 2018 and up significantly from January 2018. We are also seeing a leveling of the area unemployment rates, which are close to all-time lows. As a point of reference, economist view this rate as full employment in a range between 3.8 and 5.0%



| December SLP Sales Taxes Collection Comparisons |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$7,019,120 January 2019 > 7%, > 23% • \$6,556,003 January 2018 • \$5,373,575 December 2018 • Parish overall net up 10% from last year. (CSLEDD Intake Adjusted) |

| November SLP Unemployment Comparisons |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dec 2018 5.8% = Nov 2018 • Dec 2017 5.4 % • Dec 2016 7.0 % • Dec 2015 7.2% |

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 be including some of two articles that were posted in the Advocate by Nick Fontenot and Bill Bacque, both Special Reporters to the Advocate. These articles point out a couple of important points. One is that we have had an exceptionally strong real estate market across the region in 2018. The other thing that is important to remember as you look at these figures are that this level of growth is somewhat contrarian to the overall residential market figures across the nation. This seems to be consistent with the Acadiana market over recent history. Also, as you would expect, some of this data is focused on Lafayette, but it is worth including to help

paint the overall picture of the market across the region. Here are some of the key inputs for the articles:

“The real estate market was so strong in the Acadiana market in 2018 that it set records for number of home sales and dollar volume for homes sold.

According to the region’s year-end market report, 5,268 homes sold in 2018 for \$1,005,292,003, surpassing the \$1 billion mark for the first time. Overall, 2018’s totals eclipsed the previous high mark in 2015 and showed another gain after suffering a dip in 2016.

According to the Realtor Association of Acadiana’s Multiple Listing Service final 2018 housing sales numbers, our local housing market set new record highs in several categories. Here are our real numbers:

There were 5,268 home sales reported to the MLS for 2018 from all reporting parishes — a new record — besting last year’s previous high of 4,974 sales by 294 sales, or 5.9%. Home sales from outside Lafayette Parish rose by 7.6% over 2017

The dollar volume of all home sales reported to the MLS during 2018 eclipsed the \$1 billion-dollar mark for the first time, exceeding the previous record of \$970 million set in 2015 by over \$35 million and increasing over last year’s reported \$937 million-dollar volume by 7.3%

Sales of existing homes in Lafayette Parish were the market driver in 2018, with the number of reported sales increasing by 7% and the dollar volume of those sales up by over 10% over 2017. All price quadrants of existing home sales performed positively during 2018, though not equally.

Existing home sales priced under \$150,000, which made up 32% of the reported existing home sales, increased by 1% over 2017. Sales in the \$150,000-\$299,999 rose by just over 7%. This price segment represented 53% of total existing home sales reported in 2018.

Lastly, sales of existing homes priced at \$300,000 and up, which encompassed 15% of the sales reported, rose by nearly 21%.

As we embark on this new year, the housing sales records set this past year will become the benchmark upon which we will primarily measure this year’s performance. Our local economy in 2019 will certainly be the primary factor to watch.

Interest rates, which is a national commodity, will also bear watching. But national housing numbers, as our local numbers for 2018 prove, should be taken with a grain of salt.”

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. We hope these thoughts provide some value. We at SLED and its affiliate entities thank you for all you do and look forward to working with you on turning some of these and other area challenges into some great outcomes through the course of 2019 and beyond.

Bill

Communications

With our all new comprehensive website complete and fully operational for the past (90) days we will continue to work with Golden Shovel on improving our website presence. We participated in our first GateKeeper discussion in January 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 February 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.

In addition, SLED has entered the space of numerous social medial platforms which include LinkedIn and Facebook.

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.



There have been 111 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.



Twenty-two St. Landry Parish projects announced over the past 39 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 23 projects that we are actively engaged with at this time. Of these 25 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. Most 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 first quarter of 2019. Some 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
- **Project Belt** – Area expansion. 2.1m capex 45 FTE's (Phased expansion, currently underway, soft announcement)
- **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)
- **Project Clean** – In state expansion, area recruitment. 2.3m capex. 25 growing to 50 FTE's (March announcement anticipated)
- **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 (In construction, soft announcement, included in the jobs update)
- **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)
- **Project Link** – Area expansion. 10m capex, 25 FTE's (Expect 1st Qtr. public announcement)
- **Project Ride** – In state expansion, area recruitment 9m capex, 55FTE's (Area ground breaking that include soft announcement, included in job count)

- **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 23 visits to improve the quality of relationships with these organizations and their leadership. 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. For next month we will reset this list for 2019 and our plan is to expand the scope of these visits throughout the course of the year.

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 such for as:

- Improving education (SLP District Plan and Efficiency Evaluation)
- Redevelopment of downtowns (Opelousas DDD, Eunice Planning)
- Development of the I-49 Corridor (CSLEDD, GCEDD, Midway, Gateway Plan)
- Building leadership capacity

| Parish Employer Visits Over Past 12 Months |
|---|
| • Gaienne Lumber |
| • Dixie Storage |
| • Lowes Opelousas |
| • C&G Container |
| • Giles Automotive Group |
| • Courville Toyota |
| • Wal Mart Distribution Center |
| • Savoies Foods |
| • Noble Plastics |
| • Riceland Crawfish |
| • Design Precast Concrete & Pipe |
| • Evangeline Downs |
| • Gaubert Oil |
| • Iron Horse Implement |
| • Jerry’s Furniture |
| • MANCO Containers |
| • Prairie Construction |
| • Lemoyen Timber |
| • Dupree Carrier Godchaux Insurance |
| • Acadian Medical Group |
| • Opelousas General Hospital |
| • Piggly Wiggly Stores |
| • Stage Retail |

Vision St. Landry held its first quarterly meeting of 2019 on February 4th. Outcomes included updating current organizational bylaws as well as priority identification for the new year.

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
 - Morgan Goudeau has completed a wastewater infrastructure assess plan for both the north and south sections of the I-49. 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 commission has released the complete lawn maintenance and litter abatement schedule for 2019 to the public and has recently approved two (2) phases for additional arborist services on major interchanges along the I-49 corridor.
- Lighting along the I-49
 - All three (3) high mast lights are currently operational at the Harry Guilbeau Exit. Circuit work and trouble shooting is currently underway at the Creswell and I90 interchanges. The medium low masts and median lights will be updated once the poles are received.
- Master planning the EVD Property.
 - March 12th – HR&A will be conducting assessment of Opelousas Downtown area
 - March 13th – Populous, HR&A, Crossroads and CSRS will be on site for a working collaborative session
 - March 13th – Working dinner with Boyd Gaming Group
 - March 14th – Populous will make presentation at the March 2019 CSLEDD Commission meeting on findings and determine next steps on completion of report.

The Downtown Development District Board (DDD) – Also continues to progress with their implementing their 2018 priorities and aggressively moving into 2019. This includes:

- District efforts have resulted in a 1% dedicated sales tax levy for six businesses within the district effective January 1st.
- The district had developed a top list of priorities that provide the best initial returns on investment for downtown.
- The district has launched via social media and by way of a website landing page a Public Education/Outreach Campaign as it relates to DDD information and education.
- 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 - Some of the regional priorities for One Acadiana are:

- Active Promotion: Accelerating economic development activities using the “South Louisiana” brand for business and talent recruitment

- Infrastructure and planning: Advancing regional infrastructure priorities through a regional steering committee structure working to produce a RIVR Report of regional infrastructure priorities. SLED is a member of this steering team.
- Supporting Education: Strengthening business-led workforce development initiatives that align K-12 and higher education institutions with market demands, which includes:
 - The 55 in 25 initiative which includes working groups in:
 - Kindergarten Readiness
 - Third Grade Reading
 - High School to College Transition
 - Credential Completion
 - The Nepris Career Education Platform
- Developing Product: Aggressively developing shovel ready, certified sites across the region. One has been recently announced and two are in progress in SLP.

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 Selection Committee (2 St Landry, Port Barre, Sites Pending Certification)
- Urban Revitalization and Development Committee
- Workforce and Education Committee
- Governmental Affairs Committee
- Acadiana Regional Alliance 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. In cooperation with the APC, and 1A.

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
- Support of a strategic plan and efficiency analysis for St. Landry Parish Schools by Gibson Consulting.
- Direct support 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 and guidance on establishing a St Landry Parish Education Foundation
- Lead advocate role in securing sponsorship for the Junior Achievement financial literacy program that will begin in January at Opelousas Middle School.



T.H. Harris: The TH Harris enrollment figures were up more than five percent for the fall semester. SLCC overall was recently recognized as one the top ten colleges nationwide for enrollment growth We continue to work with the TH Harris on:

- The new LPN/RN Program has confirmed its fall 2019 targeted launch.
- We have also committed through Vision St Landry for an additional student scholarship for 2018/2019. That awardee was identified today for the NDT Program.
- 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 Scheduled for March 14th.

LSU-Eunice: LSU-E continues to increase its enrollment with to increase for the fall with enrollment figures that shows more than a six percent increase and brings their numbers close to 3300-students. We look forward to even more active partnership activities with LSU-E through:

- 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.
- 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:

- Planning session on February 28th for the City that will focus on identifying metrics for Quality of Life.
- Leading a follow-on planning work group sessions March 12th and 26th

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 strategic next steps

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
- Recent announcement of 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 1st Qtr. 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 membership meeting of 2019 on January 24th at Frank's Po'boys located in downtown Opelousas. Attendance was in the double digits and secured three (3) new memberships. An organizational priority identified for 2019 was an increase in membership by a total of twenty individuals. This will be a heavy focus for our board throughout the calendar year. TheSLP will hold its first board meeting of the year in the latter part of February 2019 in which new board members will be inducted.

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 within first quarter of 2019. We will soon be looking at options to include in a 2019/2020 request should these dollars be available.

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 complete 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 1st quarter of 2019 by the Cities engineering firm.

We continue our work on planning and engineering efforts within the CSLEDD on substantial funds received through the capital outlay process as the basis for a heavy infrastructure plan for the south side of Opelousas along I-49 as well as the Grolee area. We plan to be in construction of a wastewater treatment facility with these funds 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.

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 big improvement project that is now coming to a completion stage. There are a few final items remaining on the roof, but we are at 95% completion for the overall project. We plan to have a mother board in for our front sign in the next couple weeks.

The last LSBDC, ULL SBDC counseling session was held on February 12, 2019 and two appointments were held. The next round of sessions is scheduled for March 12th. 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. On average, the room is getting used at least several times per week. The CAVE will soon be highlighted on our new website highlighting 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.

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. February 22nd, SLED Bldg.
- Central St. Landry EDD Board Meeting, 8 a.m. on February 7thMarch 14th, SLED Bldg.
- Vision St Landry regular board meeting, April 1st, SLED Bldg.