



**Executive Director's Report — January 2019**

Greetings and Happy New Year! 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 2017. We are also seeing steady strengthening in the area unemployment rates as we approach long time historical lows as listed below.



**December SLP Sales Taxes  
Collection Comparisons**

- \$5,373,575 December 2018
- \$ 4,743,292. December 2017
- Parish overall net up 10% from last year. (CSLEDD Intake Adjusted)

**November SLP  
Unemployment Comparisons**

- Nov 2018 5.7% < 6.0 Oct
- Nov 2017 5.4 %
- Nov 2016 7.8 %
- Oct 2015 7.4%

Over the past few months we have included comments, articles and thoughts related to the oil and gas industry and its impact on Acadiana. This month we are including some comments from an article posted in the Advocate written by Mark Ballard. The article caught my attention in the way it highlights things that we should be aware as we look at the future of our state, our region, and our area. It is about the dire circumstances being faced by shrinking rural communities across Louisiana, which can be seen in all the rural parishes in Acadiana. You can be read in its entirety at [https://www.theadvocate.com/baton\\_rouge/opinion/mark\\_ballard/article\\_3f079014-15dd-11e9-a667-1f8ff527fc93.html](https://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/opinion/mark_ballard/article_3f079014-15dd-11e9-a667-1f8ff527fc93.html)

The following are some key excerpts from the article: “Many of our smaller villages are extremely challenged because of a loss of population,” state Sen. Gerald Long, R-Natchitoches, explained to the State Fiscal Review Committee. People of Long’s generation, in their 60s, can remember a time when Louisiana was predominantly a state of small towns scattered across largely rural areas.”

“In 1950 about two-thirds of the state’s population lived in small towns and rural areas, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. That had flipped by 1980 when only 31 percent of the population lived in rural areas. In 2017, the U.S. Census Bureau counted 757,126 residents, or about 16 percent of the state’s total population, living in those same areas.

Census figures show that folks are leaving small towns for the south Louisiana metropolises along Interstate 10. Those left behind tend to make less money and are less educated. The USDA Economic Research Service reported that the annual income for residents in rural areas of Louisiana was \$35,170 in 2017 compared to \$42,298 in urban areas. About one in five, or 21.2 percent, hadn’t graduated high school compared to 15.2 percent in urban areas in 2016. “

This trend has enormous ramifications on many of the fundamental decisions that legislative and local area leadership will have to try to be proactive towards. The decisions will include things like the allocation of funds for vital infrastructure improvements, the placement and operations of area schools, and to being able to provide adequate broadband connectivity to rural areas. These are just a few of some of the challenges this trend creates.

While this shift in population is not unique to Louisiana it is something that we are going to need to be keenly aware of here as we look at taking proactive approaches to planning. The underlying message is that we are looking at changes that affect our populations at an increasing accelerated rate. Continuing to evaluate and do things the same way we have in the past will not likely result in solutions that effectively meet these changes. We must continue to stay forward thinking and not be averse to having serious conversations about realistic planning alternatives for the future.

These discussions will take the kind of leadership that many of you reading this report provide. 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 a monthly basis in continually improving our website presence to include social media platform.

These services will include development of a marketing strategy that addresses five primary components: purpose and goals, advantage, target, marketing, and niche.

This 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. The active hard launch was

We are also working on an initiative to further promote outreach through print leader mail outs, electronic newsletters and dramatically enhanced video story telling clips promoting the good news of our growing progress.



There have been 109 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

- 1,068 new fulltime jobs.
- Retention of 325 existing jobs.
- Creation of at least 360 indirect jobs
- Support of an estimated 3,355 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.

- **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, 15 FTE's (High Wage) (Project is currently in progress, soft announcement)
- **Project Clean** – In state expansion, area recruitment. 2.3m capex. 25 growing to 50FTE's (1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Announcement)
- **Project Doughnut** – Area recruitment, in state expansion. 3.5m capex, 15FTE's (2<sup>nd</sup> quarter public announcement anticipated)
- **Project Drop Off** - Area expansion. 1.5m capex, 10FTE's (In construction, soft announcement)
- **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 1<sup>st</sup> quarter)
- **Project Link** – Area expansion. 10m capex, 25 FTE's (Expect 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr. public announcement)
- **Project Ride** – In state expansion, area recruitment 9m capex, 55FTE's (Expect January/Feb public ground breaking)
- **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. 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 This Year

- 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
- Ortego Oil

Vision St. Landry will host its next quarterly meeting on February 4<sup>th</sup>.

**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 paid for the final trash pick-up on the corridor last week. Beginning in the 2019 growing season there will be continuous bi-weekly grass cutting and trash pick up paid for by the commission.
- Lighting along the I-49
  - The notice to proceed on Harry Guilbeau Lighting Project was signed in October. Work is now in progress at this intersection. We anticipate all lighting there being upgraded to LED and operational in the first quarter of 2019. Once complete, the commission will begin bidding the work on Creswell and Highway 190/I-49. The commission is also beginning to look at the engineering plan for new lights at Judson Walsh.
- Master planning the EVD Property.
  - Kick-Off Workshop” for this event was held November 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> at the Club House of EVD. The events were well attended on both days with a lot of good interaction and feedback. We anticipate the next follow up with the consultant groups to be around the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of February with the final dates being coordinated this week.

**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 1<sup>st</sup>.
- 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
- Regional prospectus for 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*, is another regional asset made of economic development professionals focused on making progress on issues that impact all the parishes in Acadiana, particularly 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.

## **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 district 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.
- 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 and 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.
- Assistance in identifying critical area workforce shortages and proactive educational solutions

**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



## Community/Cultural Development

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

- Facilitating a planning session on October 22<sup>nd</sup> for the City that will focus on the SWOT, Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.
- Leading a follow-on planning work group sessions December 18<sup>th</sup> and January 8<sup>th</sup> with A follow on scheduled for January 22<sup>nd</sup>.

*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

*Arnaudville:* Multiple efforts associated with the cultural economy including:

- Alternative use considerations and 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.

*Grand Coteau:* Active and ongoing efforts include which 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 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr. of 2019.
- Established boundaries that could be used as an area economic development district

*Washington:*

- Implementation of the Midway Corridor Plan

### **St Landry Young Professionals, TheSLP**

The St. Landry Professionals will host its first membership meeting of 2019 on January 24<sup>th</sup> in our best efforts to recruit young professionals throughout the parish. The membership meeting will be held at Frank's Po'boys located in downtown Opelousas. 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.

## **Grants Update**

SLED received notice as a 2018-2019 LBIA Grant Recipient in the full amount of \$25,000.00 to be dedicated towards the total amount to replace the business center roof. The first quarterly report has been sent out prior to deadline per the grant requirements.

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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2018, in collaboration with APC, a RDBG Grant was submitted for assessing the needs of a I-49 Midway Growth Corridor Plan. We have unofficially been told that this grant should be funded by the Delta Regional Authority through the USDA. With the holidays, and now with the federal shutdown that is impacting the USDA we have not been able to get written confirmation. We hope to have that prior to the February meeting.

## The Business Center

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 January 8th, 2018. The next round of sessions is scheduled for February 12<sup>th</sup>. These services are available to businesses at any level of growth, are confidential, and are free of charge.

### 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

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. January 18<sup>th</sup>, SLED Bldg.
- Central St. Landry EDD Board Meeting, 8 a.m. on February 7<sup>th</sup>, SLED Bldg.
- SLED Board of Directors Meeting, 10 a.m. on January 19<sup>th</sup>, SLED Bldg.
- Vision St Landry regular board meeting, February 4<sup>th</sup>, SLED Bldg.