



The mission of St. Landry Parish Economic Development is to provide leadership in economic and community development that facilitates growth opportunities leading to enhanced prosperity for St. Landry Parish businesses, communities, its citizens and its youth.

## **Executive Directors Report**

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## **I - Business Center/Small Business Update**

We are currently looking forward to additional modifications to the SLED building with the new LBIA Grant. We are focusing on some additional technology upgrades and a large upgrade to the flooring around the center. As always, we work to set an example of “Owning It”; referring to owning the perception that is visible from the interstate, as well as the first impression when someone comes into our building.

The last LSBDC, ULL SBDC counseling sessions were held at SLED on September 12, 2017. The next date for these counseling services will be October 10<sup>th</sup>. These services are available to businesses at any level of growth, are confidential, and are free to our area businesses.

Last week we hosted a legislative delegation update at SLED to allow people in the area to here from area congressional representative staff on where their areas outline within the parish and the importance of the delegation working together on behalf of the parish.

As identified within our SLED 2017 priorities to co-host bimonthly small business trainings, we are currently identifying September 2017 opportunities. We will be working this week on a collaboration forum with the Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development Institute, an arm of Southern University on a panel discussion around community and business development topics.

We will continue to identify partners to align toward meeting the needs of the small business community. We will also be looking at the potential of hosting these seminars at locations alternative locations around the parish during the latter part of this year.

We have received word on partial approval for the grant application on the 2017-2018 LBIA funding grant cycle. More detail on this is provided in the grants update section.

We currently have 9 tenant’s active in the Business Center that include:

C&C Painting and Pressure Washing

Boone Speech and Learning Services

Miracle Ear

Happy Housemaids

Magnolia Community Development Corporation

Victory Manufacturing

WIOA 40

Charles G. Lawson Trucking, Inc

Global Environmental Solutions (Storage Only)

## **II – Communications**

We have started a process of upgrades on [www.opportunitystlandry.com](http://www.opportunitystlandry.com). A big focus of the new communications coordinator will be evaluating the current content on both this website, as well as slpforward.com and determine what web presence looks like strategically going forward.

We were once again selected as a feature article for business in focus magazine. This is a follow-up to the article they did a couple of years back. This magazine has a national distribution of just under 500k. We anticipate our feature to be in their October, or November publication.

To date [www.slpforward.com](http://www.slpforward.com), currently holds a total of eighty –four (84) articles shining the light on positive things happening throughout St. Landry Parish. One (1) article per week is typically uploaded onto the site on a consistent basis providing fresh and updated article content.

The most recent Google analytics test revealed that SLPForward’s number of page views totaled 404 visited by roughly 200 users. The analytics trend shows an ongoing, and perhaps a more consistent interest in the details of content stories, but there is still clearly a need for an upgraded campaign that includes a social media component and other upgrades. .

Through our continued work with Parish Government on our existing GIS platform and the executive team from Fenstermaker & Associates to establish as roadmap towards getting our parish GIS to optimal levels, multiple layers have been identified to be incorporated into the current GIS platform to included cultural districts, EDD districts, municipal boundaries and school board districts to just list a few. We have actively begun reaching out to those entities where the respective data needed is held. Next steps will be to process data sets into the proper format to then be uploaded into the GIS in layer form. We will be working to model some of the innovative GIS work done in Lake Charles, Calcasieu Parish, and the Port of Lake Charles. The GIS platform is now accessible through HTML 5 and can be viewed on all web browsers, including Google Chrome. To view the GIS platform in its new skin please visit <http://sled.totaland.com:81/> . The site currently includes updated mapping on SLP Smooth Ride Home improvements.

### **III – Property/Site Development**

There continues to be good progress with the actual and planned development on four of our major interchanges. We will be continuing our focus on building the infrastructure artery capacity in these areas. Of course, the expansion of the Central St Landry EDD was a milestone step in being able to provide the infrastructure necessary for this growth in the I-49 area of Opelousas. We are also working to put check in place to ensure this growth is developed with a “smart growth” philosophy in mind as much as possible. .

We continue to push site development with the team from LED, One Acadiana, as well as private realtors. Our goal is still two shovel ready sites for St Landry Parish by the end of 2017. We have identified four with high potential, but continue working through ownership expectations on involvement in the program. We believe it is still realistic to have these two sites by the end of this year.

### **IV Projects Update Summary: 20 Active, 6 Pending Announcement, (Belt, Blacktop, Flash, Flow, Hippo, Open Road), Pending Park (Rest) Please note (Latest Updates)**

**Project Belt** – This project has come about because of local BRE efforts and is a cooperative between a local employer and SLED in trying to bring in a supplier into their existing manufacturing facility. The job creation figures if successful are now estimated up to 45 FTE’s. *Latest Update:* Although the project has seen some unforeseen delays, it has started in small growth stages. It has further become clouded with the concept of a shared facility with Project Shell. We will be monitoring this from the perspective of both projects over the next 30 to determine the appropriate avenue for announcements.

**Project Boost** – This is a very large potential expansion project in terms of capital expenditure. The project would produce less than 15 new employees at very high wage scales and well up to 170 temporary construction jobs for a year or more. *Latest Update:* Due to recent efforts, this project will likely be delayed to go/no go by the end of this year. While we have had some updates on with the new ownership, we will be looking to have a formal sit down with the new leadership group over the next 30 days to get an update on this effort.

**Project Black Top** – This is a location expansion project with a well-established area company. The company will be looking to consolidate central operation into a newly constructed central administration facility. *Latest Update:* This project is going vertical and we anticipate a formal announcement in the next month when keys corporate officials are in the area and will also be an initial focus of our new communication coordinator.

**Project Clean** – This is a manufacturing infill development project located in the center of the parish. If successful this project will create 50 new direct positions, with the ability

to grow up to 100 FTE's. *Latest Update:* The success of this project currently hinges on the ability to rezone the existing facility towards suitable use, which has changed from its original intent due to some corporate acquisitions. Currently, the new use is in a Phase I environment evaluation. We anticipate these results to be available anytime. This is a key go/no go for this project.

**Project Expo** – *Latest Update:* The conclusion step in the option agreement has been completed. This means that the clock is on the land use of the property. We have been in active discussions with Boyd leadership on next steps. We are working currently to tie this discussion on expo into the larger picture of project fountain. This would provide a much higher probability of project expo success

**Project Fountain** – This is a large scale commercial development project that discussions have been ongoing for some time. National tenants remain committed to this project and negotiations with landowners and real estate development partners are continuing. *Latest Update:* We continue active discussions on how this project can be combined with Project Expo planning efforts to create a destination location. We have had many recent meetings with commercial brokers and investors on a broad site master plan that can be presented to corporate. We hope to have this plan conceptualized within the next 45 days with a follow-on presentation to the corporate ownership group to immediately follow.

**Project Flash** – This is a project currently underway along one of the main parish corridors that is a sub expansion of a long-time parish employer. While small in job creation, up to 5, this project could set a foundation for considerable transportation/distribution related growth around it. We are working with company leadership on a formal announcement/opening of this new facility and anticipate this happening early on with our new communications coordinator.

**Project Flow** – This is a retention and expansion project from a regional company. We have identified a location site and will be working with the leadership to further evaluate site feasibility. This new location would allow the company to potentially grow from its current level of 45 FTE's to as many as 100 FTE's within the next 30 months. We plan to have this announcement as an early priority of the new communications director in the next 30 days.

**Project Gas** – This is an industrial recruitment project being worked as a cooperative project with LED and 1A. The initial cap ex on the project is up to 150m. Job creation figure are 35 FTE's. A final decision and construction is targeted for the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2018. Project would be operational in early 2019. *Latest update:* Site Visits are being scheduled for 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter. We have not had a site visit scheduled, but will keep the project active for another 30 to 60 days for a final update from LED.

**Project Gateway** – This is a large commercial retail development project in the central parish. Property sales are in process in accordance with a detailed master plan for close to 100 acres of prime I-49 property. Crews are now working on initial infrastructure on

the site. We will be coordinating over the next 30 to 45 days on a formal announcement for this project.

**Project Green Leaf** – This is a cooperative university project with an existing facility. Site visits with the project teams have been positive. This project would create up to 50 full time positions once build out is complete. *Latest Update:* We have had multiple board presentations on this project. The final presentation will be later this month. Currently, the site in St Landry Parish is in the number one position for this project.

**Project Fresh** – This is an expansion for the company in Louisiana, but a recruitment project for our parish. Initial job creation numbers are less than 6 with room for expansion. The project hinges to some degree on project vertical with land acquisition. *Latest Update:* although we have received a letter of interest to move forward with property negotiations; a detailed impact worksheet is still going through the corporate approval process. As a reminder; this project also considers Project Vertical on finalizing site property layout.

**Project HIPPO** – This is a heavy industrial project that is very large in scope on its investment and job creation potential. Currently, we are finalizing with regional and state partners on identifying and meeting engineering requirements on the footprint site. *Latest Update:* The permitting for this project is on schedule to be completed in the second quarter. We hoped to be able to announce this site and its website in Sept, but permitting delays have pushed this till late Oct.

**Project Link** – This is a proposed expansion project with an existing parish company. If successful this project would create up to 25 new direct jobs and see more than 10 million dollars of investment into equipment and new facility construction. *Latest Update:* Met with company leadership last week. We are currently working with the company to solidify finance and incentive options. We anticipate this work being done over the next 60 days, which would put actual construction into the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2018.

**Project Protect** - This is an in-parish expansion project that has already made the land acquisition for their new site. The project could expand to up to 12 new manufacturing positions once the new location is operational. *Latest Update:* Latest discussions are that the company still has the potential for beginning their new construction early in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter.

**Project Ride** – This project represents an expansion of a large area retail site in the center of the parish. This project could create up to 50 new positions. *Latest Update:* There were key meetings at the corporate level with this project last week that will identify local ownership and operation of the facility. We expect this information to be available soon and are optimistic this project could be in construction by 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2018.

**Project Rest** – This project deals with the redevelopment and reuse of land surrounding one of our interstate intersections. There continues to be positive meetings with pivotal state agencies to move the project forward. Detailed job creations figures are still not

available on the project. *Latest Update:* The investor group for this project has recently had their project plan turned down by DOTD. This decision is now in the appeals process. While we are not optimistic on this outcome, we will continue to monitor its conclusion. Pending no new updates this project will move to park for next month.

**Project Shell** –The project is looking to refocus their feasibility back at the original building site, or a greenfield site in near proximity. If successful, this project could create up to 20 new positions. *Latest Update:* This was a previously parked project that now has been brought back into play. Per company principals this project has received USDA Grant approval. Plans are to close on the property within the next 30 days. Once that has happened we will look to make a formal announcement on the project.

**Project Vertical** – This project is dealing with a light industrial manufacturer looking to put a new production facility in the Parish. If successful this project would create up to 30 direct full-time positions. *Latest Update:* We received a recent update from the location consultant they are coming to conclusion with funding from their overseas investment group. We are still waiting on a project intake worksheet for this project, which is a step aside from the funding efforts. The inability to solidify the final funding for the project is becoming a concern. We will continue to monitor over the next 60 to see if there is any finality on funding.

**Project Wrench** – This project is a recruitment project dealing with an industrial service provider that would create up to 12 FTE's over the first 18 months of operation. Initial cap ex is projected at less than 500k. *Latest Update:* Company officials are working to finalize property acquisition for a site in the center of the parish. We anticipate this coming to a go/no go within the next 45 days.

**Project Open Road** – This is an expansion project for a major employer in the parish. This will take main facility numbers from around 700 to close to 945, 245 FTE's, much of which has already take place. In total, this will make the total employee base close to 1100 employees. *Latest Update:* We plan to have this formal press release announcement on this project as one of the first tasks for the new communication coordinator.

## **Announced Projects**

**Project Brace – Announced Retention – Expansion** – Retain 65 FTE's create 25 FTE's. estimated 29 indirect, estimate 50 temp construction positions.

**Project Incubate – Ongoing Business Center Incubation** – Create 105 FTE/PT positions

**Project Lot – Announced Expansion** – Retain 25 FTE's, create 45 FTE's. estimated 85 temp construction positions.

**Project Lid – Announced Regional Retention** – Retain 100 FTE's, create up to 75 FTE's, estimated 45 indirect, estimated 120 temp construction.

**Project Outpost (A) – Announced Recruitment** – Create 35 FTE’s. estimated 95 temp construction.

**Project Bayou – Announced Recruitment** - Create 100 FTE’s, estimated 160 temp construction positions.

**Project Slip – Announced Expansion** – Create 14 FTE/Contract, estimated 18 indirect estimated 2100 Temp Construction positions.

**Project Outpost – Announced Recruitment** – Create 45 FTE’s, estimated 100 Temp Construction positions.

**Project Lynx – Announced Recruitment** - Create 123 FTE’s, estimated 135 indirect positions; Estimated 200 Temp Construction positions.

**Project Spin – Announced Recruitment** – Create 2 FTE’s, estimated 8 Temporary Construction positions.

**Project Lift – Announced Recruitment** - Create 16 FTE’s, estimated 20 indirect, Estimated 35 Temp Construction Positions.

**Project Strip – Announced Expansion** – Create 75 FTE’s, estimated 90 temp Construction positions.

**Project Essen - Announced Expansion** – Create 20 FTE’s, estimated 24 indirect positions, estimated 70 construction positions.

**Project Rip – Announced Recruitment** – Create 12 FTE’s, estimated 19 temporary construction positions.

**Project Roto – Announced Expansion** – Create 15 FTE’s, estimated 19 indirect positions, estimate 22 temporary construction.

**Project Alon – Announced Expansion** – Create 12 FTE’s, estimated 14 indirect, estimated 48 temporary construction.

**Project Runway – Announced Recruitment:** Create 25 FTE’s, estimated 16 indirect, estimated 55 temp construction.

**Project Martin – Announced Expansion:** Create 29 FTE’s, estimated 35 temp construction.

## **V – Area and Regional Development Items:**

### *1A (One Acadiana)*

We are working now to identify what we expect to have as a new leader of One Acadiana. There have been some tremendous strides made of the past several years with Jason El Koubi. With Jason now leaving the state for another opportunity, it is



giving the board and opportunity to look at what is needed for the next 3 to 5-year future of One Acadiana.

We continue to actively participate in the ARA (Acadiana Regional Alliance), which is made up of area Tourism entities, Chambers of Commerce, and Economic Development organizations. Some of the other key near term items from this group are:

- LACCE Conference • Primary way that chamber leaders meet and coordinate with each other. The Crowley, Broussard and Vermilion chambers will be co-host this year's conference in Lafayette on September 17 – 20.
- Building the Region Conference - Focus will be on Evangeline and St. Landry parishes on November the 9<sup>th</sup>

Progress is also continuing a regional level with a regional business accelerator effort. This is a partnership with the Economic Development Administration (EDA) Winrock International, Chase Bank, One Acadiana, AEDC and INNOV8 Acadiana. Currently, we are making considerable progress on strategy for marketing Acadiana to entrepreneurs from around the country. Earlier this month was a draft pitch night that was highly successful in attendance and interest by area companies. They received more than 200 applications for this event that ultimately selected 10 finalists in this competition.

For 2017 we have a target of sitting down with quality meetings with 20 of our top parish employers. Our goal will be not only to determine any challenges, or opportunities for these employers, but also to continue to improve the quality of relationships with these leaders so that they can provide input on key challenges and decisions we are actively engaged in around the parish, the region, and the state. Currently we have visited with the following 14 employers:

- Stage Retail
- Giles Automotive Group
- St Landry Homestead
- Alon USA Energy INC
- Tony Chachere's
- Evangeline Downs Racetrack and Casino
- Wal-Mart Distribution Center
- LHC Group
- C & G Containers
- Riceland Crawfish, INC
- Opelousas General Health Systems
- Noble Plastics
- Ortego Oil & Supply Company
- Savoie's Food Products
- Sterling Automotive Group

The new look and feel of the school board meetings under the new superintendent is very noticeable and very positive. We continue our work with Mr. Jenkins in multiple areas, including communication, consideration of a strategic plan for the district, private industry support, a “grass roots” awareness of the importance for parents and the community to be involved with education, as well as the consideration of a foundation for SLP Schools. The strategic plan for St Landry Parish Schools will be a focus of our line item discussions on the regular agenda.

We are continuing to look for ways to build future value into the OGH Bio Medical Academy here in Opelousas as member of the advisory board for the academy. A new director has been selected and we hope to reengage this new director during this fall semester.

We have established a new schedule and will be meeting on a regular and recurring basis with leaders from SLCC and the TH Harris Campus, both at the parish level, as well as at the regional level. We will also get an update at our Oct meeting on an inaugural RN Cohort partnership for a 2-year program that is partnered with OGH. We also continue to support a SLED scholarship for a St Landry Parish resident attending SLCC through funding provided through GOEIDC.

Once again, LSU-E has had one of the highest percentage increases in enrollment of any state university for the fall semester. The campus is also seeing some exciting dual enrollment program initiation with students from multiple parishes, including St Landry. We are continuing to explore health care related partnership opportunities that may make sense for LSU-E. We also continue to support a SLED scholarship for a St Landry Parish resident attending LSU-E next year through proceeds provided through GOEIDC.

We continue to make progress with the CEO Roundtable support organization called Vision St Landry on strategically identifying priorities that could have significant impacts for SLP over the next 5 – 20 years. The group continues to make significant strides with its work with its respective focus groups on *education*, *redevelopment of downtowns* and *growing the I-49 Corridor*. Each of these focus groups is tracking the progress of these initiatives in a matrix dashboard that is reported on to the entire board in quarterly meetings. This group recently went through a follow-up visioning session to look at additional long-term priorities for the parish.

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

The facility and the finances for the St Luc Hospital are now in the process of evaluation by St Landry Parish and the State. Actions now turn towards looking at effectively mitigating any future damage to the facility, what immediate improvements should be

made to the facility, as well as what the process would be to determine future occupancy tenants for the building. There is an effort underway with an LSU partnership to help identify what this building and its uses will be in the future.

An update on the new Central St Landry Economic Development District will be provided as a part of the regular meeting agenda. This new district is likely to be a landmark success in the future growth throughout the core of St Landry Parish along the I-49.

As part of the regular meeting agenda we will be discussing SLED Board appointment for the DDA in Opelousas.

We continue to work towards regaining progress with the leadership of Eunice on how we can best help them to identify and progress priorities for their community. A few areas of progress so far, this year have been:

- Sending the Mayor of Eunice to an ED 101 Basic Course.
- Paving the Eunice Industrial Park Road under Smooth Ride Home
- The town has had an initial meeting of a newly formed economic development advisory committee.
- Actively engaging the Eunice Rotary Club with a recurring attendance by Brandy.
- Meeting with Eunice Chamber leaders about best practices in other areas.

Grand Coteau planning and infrastructure efforts along their business corridor continues and includes:

- Engineering phase zero for a traffic solution at the frontage road cross over intersection
- A pedestrian transportation plan (TAP Grant)
- Wastewater, water and drainage improvements in the district.
- Overhead lighting at the interchange
- Improvements in landscape and art scape at the overpass.

We continue work with the leadership in Sunset on a traffic solution for Highway 93 and 182, as well as the potential for an economic development district that could be used to fund the match needed for these infrastructure improvements.

The Placemaking Task Force comprised of businesses from the Sunset, Grand Coteau and Arnaudville area are making excellent progress on project priorities identified that will result in business growth as they become successful. For example, the Old Sunset High School has been recently approved to serve as a French Immersion Charter School, while the Hanging Garden Project has made tremendous strides with an anticipated RFP release date in coming months. The group is also looking at alternative uses for the old arena in Sunset.

In August, TheSLP held a Lunch and Learn Series centered on the theory the 'Drama Triangle'. The series was conducted by Carl Herrick former Head Coach of the LSU Sales Team at LSU's College of Business from 2010 through the spring of 2016. The series focused on self-empowerment and the shifting yourself from the three (3) faces of victim. Moving forward TheSLP will be meeting with St. Landry Tourism on the possibility of a Eat/Shop Local Campaign to be launched in late fall 2017 should the initiative deem feasible. Their membership continues to grow our membership on a consistence basis.

### **Grants Update:**

We have received notification of partial award for the LBIA Grant for the 2017-18. The focus of this grant will be some technology upgrades, but more along the lines of building improvements, such as new flooring in many areas.

We have received notice through the Acadiana Planning Commission, that a DOTD TAP Grant designed to address the accessibility and safety of pedestrian transportation in the business district area of Grand Coteau has been approved. The town will be considering a final approval allocation of an additional 200k for these improvements at their meeting on September 20<sup>th</sup>.

We are working with a local engineering firm along with Opelousas Downtown Leaders on the final implementation of a TAP Grant for sidewalk improvements in the downtown area.

We are currently working on planning and engineering efforts within the Harry Guilbeau EDD with funds received through the capital outlay process last fall that will be used as the basis for a heavy infrastructure plan for the south side of Opelousas along I-49.

We have had several recent meetings with teams from the USDA on grant and loan guarantee opportunities available to public and private sector entities in the parish.

### **VII – Training Opportunities**

#### **True South Basic Economic Development Course**

Course Overview: The Basic Economic Development Course is an introductory look at economic development in North America. Students are given an overview of the tools and techniques of modern economic development, including the professional specialties that have formed in the last 20 years.

LIDEA upcoming course anticipated for January 2018. Dates to be confirmed.

## **VIII – Conclusion**

While there are still question marks regionally in oil and gas, there is good evidence to support a stabilizing of the overall Acadiana Economy for late 2017 and possibly some very modest rebounding in 2108. With some of the current momentum and proactive initiatives in the parish this broader momentum should fare well for St Landry towards an accelerated wave of momentum of growth throughout this year and into next year.

Please don't underestimate how important your backing as board members has been and continues to be in allowing us to make meaningful progress on establishing frameworks that will set a path for continued growth in St Landry Parish over the next 5, 10, 15 years, and beyond. This is not easy. It takes persistence and patience, but we are getting there. We have some big challenges on big initiatives over the next two months that we really need to pull together on. We have always said it is in the challenges where the opportunities lay in disguise for the right kinds of proactive thinking. With your tremendous support, we continue to stay "Moving Forward" and leaders of positive change that will bring a bright future for St Landry Parish!