

# Strategic Plan for St. Landry Parish Economic Development



## In Partnership with:

Acadiana Economic Development Council  
Cleco Corporation  
Entergy Corporation  
SLEMCO  
City of Eunice and the Economic Development Committee  
Evangeline Downs Hotel

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## St. Landry Parish Strategic Economic Development Plan

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## **St. Landry Parish Strategic Economic Development Plan**

### **I. St. Landry Parish Economic Development Mission Statement**

The mission of St. Landry 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 youth.

### **II. Purpose of the Strategic Economic Development Plan**

The purpose of this strategic plan is to set forth the strategic goals and strategic actions for the economic development of St. Landry Parish. This strategy is designed to address the specific needs and concerns of the parish as identified by St. Landry Economic Development with respect to increasing the quality and quantity of jobs, and improving the quality of life and the business environment over the next 5 years. The intended result from this strategic planning effort is a more inclusive strategy to move the community forward to become a better place in which to live, work, and enjoy.

The plan will help facilitate a road map for St. Landry Economic Development's economic and community development effort, telling it where the parish is, where it wants to go, and how to get there. The strategic plan should be modified throughout the five years as St. Landry Economic Development manages expectations and changes in the economy, its operations (staff, budget, board), resources, and commitment of partners that are a critical part of the implementation process.

The success of plan implementation is dependent upon St. Landry Economic Development's collaboration with economic and community development partners in St. Landry Parish, cities, Lafayette regional group AEDC, businesses, higher education, and state entities. Once the plan has been completed and approved by the St. Landry Economic Development board, formal discussions should begin with the various partners that can help in its implementation. Some of the goals and actions in this plan are beyond the typical scope of work of an economic development organization and will likely require support from other area entities that are suited to assist in their implementation due to their expertise.

This strategic economic development plan contains the following components:

- Windshield Tour Community Assessment;
- Economic Base Analysis;
- Planning sessions;
- Development priorities for St. Landry Parish's future;
- A series of goals;
- A series of strategic actions directed at the achievement of each of the stated goals;
- A set of outcomes for each goal that will facilitate future evaluation and adjustment of the performance of the plan; and
- A suggested set of economic indicators that will support the achievements made by St. Landry Economic Development to the parish's economy.

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### III. Windshield Tour

As the first step in process of working with the St. Landry Economic Development to develop a strategic economic development plan, Ardyn Thriffiley had an initial interactive session and parish tour with Bill Rodier of St. Landry Economic Development and Jody Soileau of SLEMCO, longtime parish resident and utility business and economic development manager, to learn firsthand about the St. Landry Parish economy, communities, and assets as a starting point to understand the economic landscape and strengths/weaknesses/neutrals of the parish as a location for business operations.

This assessment of the community is not intended to be a detailed data-driven evaluation. However, this process is similar to one of the ways communities are evaluated in most actual site selection projects. The feedback is intended to help St. Landry Economic Development understand St. Landry Parish from an outsider's perspective and also possibly assist in determining some improvements that can be made to make it more attractive for business operations and market its strengths. During our discussion, insight into the successes and challenges of the parish were gathered.

#### Observations at a Glance

##### *Key strengths*

- Good transportation system with one interstate and one U.S. highway running north-south and U.S. highway running east-west.
- Land for development and ownership by St. Landry Economic Development.
- Good location with proximity to Lafayette and its amenities, including higher education, fiber optic, entrepreneurial network and business sectors.
- Higher education and training availability in the parish and surrounding region.

##### *Priority Areas for Improvement*

- Public education system is one of the poorest performing in the state.
- One marketable site owned by St. Landry Economic Development needs to be focused on and marketed.
- No modern suitable available industrial or commercial buildings.
- Downtown community blight and appearance.

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- No zoning and planning in place.

### ***Neutrals/Opportunities***

- Develop the business center into a resource and education center for startups and small businesses.
- Culture, recreation and tourism.
- Airports and port access with continued funding for development.

## **IV. Economic Base Analysis**

In order to understand growth opportunities for St. Landry Parish we need to understand where the growth has occurred. We analyzed the parish economy over the last decade using data from the U.S. Census Bureau (2000 and 2010 Census data) and the Bureau of Economic Analysis to determine growth trends (population, workforce, employment, wages, income, educational attainment, and retail trade.)

### **Highlights**

This report analyzed the economic trends that occurred within the last decade in St. Landry Parish in comparison to the Lafayette MSA, Louisiana and the U.S. Highlights of the report included:

- ❖ Population in the parish has decreased by 4.9% (2000-2010 Census).
- ❖ 56.3% of the population is working age (20 to 64), slightly lower than the Lafayette MSA and Louisiana (2010).
- ❖ Per capita income increased by 87.8% over the last decade and is 91.7% of the U.S.
- ❖ 24.3% of the population 25 years or older have less than a high school education.
- ❖ Top job growth in the parish occurred in arts/entertainment, transportation/warehousing, real estate rental and leasing, administrative/waste, healthcare/social assistance, and utilities.
- ❖ Manufacturing jobs in the parish decreased by 17.8%.
- ❖ Average annual wages in the parish grew by nearly 41%, the same rate as the Lafayette MSA.
- ❖ Retail sales grew by 64.3% percent from 2002 to 2007.

## **V. Employer Interviews**

The input from existing businesses operating in a community is an important step to understanding the strengths/weaknesses/neutrals for attracting prospective businesses and developing a strategic economic development plan.

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We conducted one-on-one interviews with company owners and executives of a representative sample of the industries operating in St. Landry Parish. The firms ranged in size and industry and included Alon Chemical, a national-based petroleum refiner that purchased the Valero refinery at the Port of Krotz Springs in 2009; Tony Chaceres, a long-time, family owned food manufacturer; Opelousas General Health Systems, a not-for-profit healthcare services provider with several locations in the parish; and Noble Plastics, a plastics manufacturer and engineering consulting that located to Grand Coteau in 2006.

In these meetings we discussed various aspects of operating in St. Landry Parish including workforce, business costs, access to markets, quality of life, business needs, expansions, and any opportunities for upstream and downstream operations to support the existing businesses.

The results mirrored the initial community assessment from the windshield tour; however, some additional insight was provided on workforce and skills gaps.

### **What Companies Had to Say**

#### Strengths

- Transportation access;
- Cost and availability of land;
- Access to amenities in Lafayette;
- Availability of higher education in the parish;
- Support from the cities and residents for expansion;
- Utility services;
- Availability of low skill production and operations workers;
- Long-term workforce with good work ethic once they are located.

#### Weaknesses

- K-12 public school system;
- For the most part, hiring occurs within the greater Lafayette region as there are workforce skills gaps in the parish (engineers, maintenance, craftsman, pipefitters, welders, machinists, electricians, instrumentation);
- Condition of local roads;
- Lack of zoning and planning in parish and cities.

#### Neutrals/Opportunities

- Cultural economy (arts, entertainment, culture, etc.) yet many shops and venues aren't open during the week;
- Lack of public transportation;
- Insure that higher education has the programs in place to produce a workforce for businesses in the parish;

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- Collaboration between business and all levels of education;
- Lack of promotion and visibility of higher education institutions.

### **VI. Planning Sessions**

During a succession of strategic planning meetings with St. Landry Economic Development executive director, Bill Rodier, and partners, we brainstormed on the following aspects of the parish as a means for determining the priorities on which St. Landry Economic Development would focus its efforts:

- What's working, why is it working and how do we enhance and promote it?
- What's not working, how do we fix it and who is involved?
- What opportunities might exist, how do we take advantage of them, and how do we go about tackling them?

### **VII. Economic Development Priorities**

The priorities were determined by the core committee during the brainstorming sessions based on the committee's knowledge of economic and community development best practices to address the specific needs and concerns of the parish with respect to increasing the quality and quantity of jobs, and improving the quality of life and the business environment over the next 5 years. The priorities don't necessarily take into consideration St. Landry Economic Development's capacity to focus on all of these priorities given its staffing level.

#### Infrastructure/Product Development

Preparing the "product" is the foundation for attracting new investment and jobs for a community. Companies with expansion or location plans are seeking developed sites, business/industrial parks and buildings with utility and road infrastructure in which they can quickly and easily begin operations.

#### Economic Development

For communities that are actively seeking to diversify and create sustainable economies, existing businesses are the largest component of employment growth. Determining the growth prospects of existing business is important for future development, but is also an important issue in marketing of the community. Communities with a rapidly expanding economic base are less likely to attract new employers, as external companies are likely to consider the level of competition for trained talent too risky. Likewise, an economy with a dwindling employment base is likely to attract additional companies, because the cost pressures, availability of sites, and the ability to recruit talent by new companies are enhanced in such conditions. St. Landry Parish resides between these two points and is well-positioned to market its assets and strengths to capture further growth.

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### Community Development

Community development is a broad term given to the practice of building strong and resilient local communities. Community development seeks to empower individuals and groups of people by providing them with the skills and education they need to effect change in their own communities. These skills are often created through the formation of various groups working for a common agenda to affect change.

The key purpose of this priority for St. Landry Economic Development is to provide assistance to the cities in St. Landry Parish to build community capacity and growth opportunities while involving their partners including chambers, civic groups, involved citizens, business owners and others that have a stake in their community's future.

### Marketing/Communications

Marketing/Communications is a vital component in the St. Landry Economic Development strategic plan to promote and enhance awareness of the assets, strengths and offerings for new business opportunities and to improve the perception of St. Landry Parish as a place in which to live and operate a business. Successful marketing campaigns are most effective by implementing a coordinated strategy, at a targeted market segment, and with partners in the parish, region and state. The purpose is to engage new opportunities that will strengthen the parish's economic base and grow the prosperity of the community while maintaining its quality of life standards.

### Entrepreneurship/Small Business Development

Business incubators continue to be a viable economic development tool that can energize a community. Incubators can develop companies, create jobs, diversify the economy, increase tax revenue, and provide other economic benefits to a community. A community with a business incubator program can be viewed as progressive and supportive of entrepreneurs and small growth companies if the right programs and services are in place to assist this industry sector. To become a successful incubator, the St. Landry Economic Development Business Center must balance between being a real estate revenue generator and true incubator offering services and resources for startups and small growth companies.

### Workforce Development/Education

Having an available skilled and educated workforce is in the top three site location factors for businesses looking to expand into another location. St. Landry Parish needs to insure that there is a talent pool to meet current and future needs. St. Landry Parish businesses expressed the importance of focusing on education as a means to providing a workforce and a quality of living for its residents. St. Landry Economic Development's collaboration with employers, K-12 and higher education, and parish partners is key to meeting employer needs while also insuring job opportunities for parish residents.

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### Retirement Community

The U.S. population is living longer and there are many years after work retirement to enjoy life. Louisiana has been a draw for retirees for its quality of life, activities, attractions and cost of living. The state (RetireLouisianaStyle.com) has received accolades in numerous trade journals. A U.S. News & World Report blog outlined what retirees are seeking in a community: low cost of living, planned living communities with smaller housing options, healthcare services, culture/recreation, continuing education, quality of life, public transportation, good weather, low taxes, and access to amenities nearby.

### **VIII. Target Industries**

For communities that are actively seeking to diversify and create sustainable economies, existing businesses are the largest component of employment growth. Determining the growth prospects of existing business is important for future development, but is also an important issue in marketing of the community. Communities with a rapidly expanding economic base are less likely to attract new employers, as external companies are likely to consider the level of competition for trained talent too risky. Likewise, an economy with a dwindling employment base is likely to attract additional companies, because the cost pressures and ability to recruit talent by new companies is enhanced in such conditions.

St. Landry Parish has seen employment growth in the healthcare, arts/entertainment/recreation (culture), transportation/warehousing, real estate rental & leasing, and utilities sectors over the last decade, and as a result, should initially focus its efforts on building upon this growth by working with existing companies on expansions and related business products/services while also recruiting new companies based on its strengths and assets as well as workforce talent.

The parish is in a good position to capture outgrowth from Lafayette as it becomes land locked, costly, and oversaturated. The oil and gas services, transportation/logistics, food processing, cultural/entertainment, and healthcare are opportunities to capture.

In addition to capturing opportunities within the Lafayette region, the onset of the recent activity in the Lake Charles region as it becomes a global leader in energy exploration and production with the buildup of the LNG (liquefied natural gas) industry in this area will inevitably create opportunities for the Lafayette region and St. Landry Parish in terms of investment and job creation by companies seeking available land and a talent pool.

**Oil & Gas Services:** The onset of the recent activity in the Lake Charles region as it becomes a global leader in energy exploration and production with the buildup of the LNG (liquefied natural gas) industry in this area will inevitably create opportunities for the Lafayette region and St. Landry Parish in terms of

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investment and job creation by companies seeking available land and a talent pool. Targets include construction, transportation services, and housing.

**Transportation/Logistics:** St. Landry Parish has assets for the attraction of warehouse-distribution centers. Its location to Interstate-10 and Interstate-49 along with U.S. Highways 190 and 167, provide north-south and east-west connectivity to north Louisiana and Texas and on into numerous southern states.

The Wal-Mart Distribution Center in St. Landry Parish provides an opportunity to feed product into Wal-Mart's distribution network, which is a location advantage for warehousing by Wal-Mart national and regional vendors. It is also an advantage for manufacturers that are Wal-Mart vendors.

In addition, the two general airports and a shallow port with barge and dock access on the Atchafalaya River make the parish attractive for this industry.

**Agriculture:** Agriculture is significant part of the economy in Louisiana with an impact including employment, investment and tax base. Agriculture can be grouped into foods, fibers, fuels and raw materials. St. Landry Parish would like to understand the opportunities to capture this market as it has available land with good soil, climate, workforce, and food manufacturers that can contribute.

**Food Processing:** St. Landry Parish has a strong base of food processing businesses that formed organically due to the region's cultural heritage and passion for food. Local food manufacturer, Tony Chacres, has expanded its product line over the last several years following the national foray into ready-to-prepare and prepared foods. St. Landry Parish has an opportunity to piggyback on this growth as it has what the industry is seeking in terms of labor and logistics with the opportunity for food, packaging, transportation and other suppliers. Local and/or regional start-ups firms could become a part of this food supplier network.

**Culture/Entertainment:** Part of the draw of suburban communities for residential living is that basic quality of life amenities are available including culture, recreation, retail, entertainment, and restaurants. In addition, if a community wants to become a tourism destination or a place where people want to visit, it should have a balance of offerings to attract and retain visitors for at least a day or night's stay. This industry includes the arts, music, food, film, historical preservation and culture, of which St. Landry Parish has a presence.

St. Landry Parish can increase opportunities for residents and visitors for the ultimate goal of increasing its tax base. The most immediate opportunities for development include the out parcel that fronts Evangeline Downs and the proposed equestrian expo center adjacent to Copper Mills.

**Healthcare:** The healthcare sector in St. Landry Parish had a 50 percent job growth rate over the last decade, which is not surprising given national industry trends and the expansion of one of the parish's

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largest employers, Opelousas General Health System. OGH's multiple facilities serve the seven parish region and it is evident that it will continue to thrive as it expands its service offerings. Ancillary healthcare-related companies have followed and additional opportunities will follow to position St. Landry Parish as a regional hub for healthcare within the greater Lafayette region. Though the U.S. healthcare industry is in transition it will inevitably continue to grow due to the aging population and federal laws mandating healthcare insurance for all U.S. citizens and electronic health records for hospitals and other healthcare institutions.

### IX. Goals and Strategic Actions

The goals and strategic actions of this plan are outlined in this section. A goal is a specific statement of purpose of what the plan is trying to achieve. In most cases goals have timelines well into the future; however, there are numerous near-future strategic actions that will provide interim impact.

The preceding priority issues were converted into a series of economic development goals for St. Landry Parish to be accomplished by St. Landry Economic Development with the assistance of its many collaborators. Although some of the goals and their consequent actions are not directly related to the creation of jobs or attraction of firms, the economic development profession has come to realize that the economic future of communities rests on the foundation of such issues as quality of life, local education, infrastructure, roads and highways, municipal services, etc. Companies will not be attracted to or expand in communities that can't meet the basic requirements of satisfactory livability as well as a good business environment.

The **strategic actions** will be the strategy used to complete the goals. There are many steps that are taken to achieve short and long term success in economic development. Each strategic action was categorized by priority and estimated timeline for completion.

**Outcomes** are the change that is brought about as a result of the strategic actions and that contribute to the goal. The outcome describes a measurable impact, which will occur over time.

It's difficult for an economic development organization, especially a small parish operation such as St. Landry Economic Development, to tie each goal back to a **metric** such as job creation and investment; however, there are many ways in which St. Landry Economic Development can measure its direct and indirect impact on the St. Landry Parish economy.

- Number of business retention visits and expansions;
- Business retention analysis;
- Number of prospect visits and related jobs & investment;
- Proposals to prospects and LED;
- Jobs and investment from the Louisiana Economic Development Advance Notifications;
- Quarterly economic indicator report (building permits, sales tax, new business incorporations, utility meter count, hotel/motel tax, house sales, etc.)

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The success of plan implementation is dependent upon St. Landry Economic Development's collaboration with economic and community development partners in St. Landry Parish, cities, Lafayette regional group AEDC, businesses, higher education, and possibly state entities. Once the plan has been completed and approved by the St. Landry Economic Development board, formal discussions should begin with the various partners that can help in its implementation. Some of the goals and actions in this plan are beyond the typical scope of work of an economic development organization and will likely require support from other area entities that are best suited to assist with implementation due to their expertise and resources.

### **A- Infrastructure/Product Development**

***Goal: The parish has adequately developed and maintained business sites and infrastructure to meet the needs of businesses, residents and visitors into the future.***

***Short-term Outcome:*** Potential development opportunities and improvements have been assessed and targeted.

***Long-term Outcome:*** Infrastructure/product investment, new businesses and existing expansions, and increased tax base for the parish.

#### **Essential Priority Strategic Actions (Immediate Actions thru 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014)**

**Strategic Action E-1A:** Advocate and seek support from the region's state legislative delegation to secure funding for priority infrastructure projects.

- a. Inventory and prioritize the projects.
- b. Tour the parish with the legislative delegation.
- c. Hire a lobbying firm to manage the capital budget process.
- d. Seek grants through a seasoned grant writer for priority infrastructure projects.

Estimated Timeline: Essential Priority –1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2014

**Strategic Action E-2A:** Review existing sites owned by St. Landry Economic Development as well as sites adjacent/close proximity to these sites to determine viability and/or best use. Develop the sites suitable for the target industries in this strategic plan.

Estimated Timeline: High Priority - 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014

**Strategic Action E-3A:** Discuss and pursue speculative building investment opportunities with the St. Landry Parish Airport, Port of Krotz Springs and other enterprises as a means for building capacity and a revenue stream for St. Landry Economic Development.

Estimated Timeline: Essential Priority – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014

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**Strategic Action E-4A:** Determine the desirability and feasibility of the various options for the development of business and commercial sites including management and ownership of the site(s) (i.e., City-owned and developed, a public-private partnership, privately developed and managed).

Estimated Timeline: Essential Priority – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014

**Strategic Action E-5A:** Define TIF districts for business-related development and other incentives that may be a stimulus for development.

- a. Identify most viable sites through real estate developers, GIS tools, community officials and private property owners.
- b. Identify commercial development partners.
- c. Seek a consultant to establish guidelines and parameters.
- d. Approval process with the city or parish.

Estimated Timeline: Essential Priority – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014

**Strategic Action E-6A:** Identify and evaluate additional sites in the parish for business development.

- a. Prepare for and participate in AEDC's site suitability analysis for sites 20 acres or more.
- b. Have dialogue with the Louisiana Economic Development to determine the size of sites target industry prospects are seeking.
- c. Contact and meet with land owners on their potential interest.
- d. Pursue LED's site certification program once suitable sites are determined.

Estimated Timeline: Essential Priority – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014

**Strategic Action E-7A:** Thorough location analysis in the parish for the development of a light industrial park.

- a. Hire a site consultant.

Estimated Timeline: Essential Priority – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014

**Strategic Action E-8A:** Provide support for a parish-wide road tax to Parish President Fontenot and the Parish Council to adequately finance ongoing parish road improvements.

Estimated Timeline: High Priority – 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2013

### ***High Priority Strategic Actions (Current thru 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2015)***

**Strategic Action H-1A:** Investigate the interest by Union Pacific Railroad and Acadiana Rail collaboration on a UP tie-in of the Acadiana Rail.

- a. Find a development/project that would benefit from this collaboration so that each rail provider would be interested in investing.

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Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority – 2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr 2014

**Strategic Action H-2A:** Host a bi-annual meeting for real estate firms, developers, private property owners to convey the importance of their participation and role in St. Landry Economic Development's economic development initiatives and to gain their buy-in to list available properties in the Louisiana Site Selection Center.

Estimated Timeline: High Priority 2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr 2014

**Strategic Action H-3A:** Provide planning assistance to communities in the parish.

- a. Provide best practices and tools.
- b. Engage local partners in the process as they have ideas and a stake in the parish's future.
- c. Develop recommendations and guidelines for zoning and planning regulations to be consistently used by the parish and cities.
- d. Identify funding sources for priority community projects.

Estimated Timeline: High Priority – 4<sup>th</sup> Qtr 2014

**Strategic Action H-4A:** Participate and support the Acadiana Region Metropolitan Planning Organization in its effort to analyze and develop a regional public transportation system.

Estimated Timeline: High Priority - 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2015

### **Medium Priority Strategic Actions (Current thru 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2014)**

**Strategic Action M-1A:** Create attractive access entryway and/or sign to welcome visitors to St. Landry Parish.

- a. Work with Parish President Fontenot and the Parish Council on the suitability, design, and location.

Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority - 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2014

## **B- Economic Development**

For communities that are actively seeking to diversify and create sustainable economies, existing businesses are the largest component of employment growth. Determining the growth prospects of existing business is important for future development, but is also an important issue in marketing of the community. Communities with a rapidly expanding economic base are less likely to attract new employers, as external companies are likely to consider the level of competition for trained talent too risky. Likewise, an economy with a dwindling employment base is likely to attract additional companies, because the cost pressures, availability of sites, and the ability to recruit talent by new companies is

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enhanced in such conditions. St. Landry Parish resides between these two points and is well-positioned to market its assets and strengths to capture further growth.

St. Landry Parish has seen employment growth in the healthcare, arts/entertainment/recreation (culture), transportation/warehousing, real estate rental & leasing, and utilities sectors over the last decade, and as a result, should initially focus its efforts on building upon this growth by working with existing companies on expansions and related business products/services while also recruiting new companies based on its strengths and assets as well as workforce talent.

***Goal: Diversify and create a sustainable economy for St. Landry Parish to increase the standard of living for residents and a thriving environment where businesses can be successful.***

***Short-term Outcome:*** Preparation for growth through research, planning and marketing.

***Long-term Outcome:*** Infrastructure/product investment, new businesses and existing expansion investment, job opportunities for St. Landry Parish residents, new residents and increased tax base for the parish.

### **High Priority Strategic Actions (Current Thru 3rd Quarter 2014)**

**Strategic Action H- 1B:** Form a business interest/advisory group from a cross section of businesses and other stakeholders to work on common issues to operating in the parish (workforce, education, transportation/roads, services)

- a. Research best practices to determine the mission, format, and agenda to gain their input and buy-in (Bayou Industrial Group; Northshore Business Council)
- b. Host quarterly meetings to update on St. Landry Economic Development activities as they relate to the businesses.
- c. Develop a plan of work with action steps, timeline, responsible party and tracking of results.
  - a. Form sub-committees for tackling each issue.

Estimated Timeline: High Priority 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014

**Strategic Action H-2B:** Establish formal guidelines for the use, type and approval process of incentives available to both business prospects and existing businesses.

- a. Consult with the St. Landry Parish president (council) and each of the cities in evaluating the options available.

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- b. Consideration should be given to developing incentives based on capital investment, number of new jobs, minimum wage threshold, location of site (owned by the city, St. Landry Economic Development versus private land owner), lease/sale, and/or targeted business sector.

Estimated Timeline: High Priority – 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2014

### **Medium Priority Strategic Actions (Current thru 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2014)**

**Strategic Action M-1B:** Host an annual St. Landry Economic Development “state of the economy” event including a recognition program to honor various partners for their economic and community development efforts with St. Landry Economic Development.

- a. Existing Business of the Year
- b. Entrepreneur of the Year
- c. Educator of the Year

Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority – 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2014

### ***Transportation/Logistics***

Build upon the existing assets and businesses engaged in this sector to create new investment opportunities. The Wal-Mart Distribution Center in St. Landry Parish provides an opportunity to draw additional distribution centers utilizing the sites identified under Infrastructure/Product Development.

### **High Priority Strategic Actions (Current thru 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014)**

**Strategic Action H-3B:** Identify and prepare one site to market to transportation/logistics industry for recruitment of additional companies. Refer to strategic actions in Infrastructure/Product Development

Estimated Timeline: High Priority – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014

**Strategic Action H-4B:** Promote development opportunities for St. Landry Economic Development with the St. Landry Parish Airport, Eunice Airport and the Port of Krotz Spring that would generate revenue for the organization.

- a. Assess the potential market for corporate jet hangars and possibly other speculative buildings to not only serve corporate jet fly-ins but warehouse/distribution, manufacturing, etc. through discussion with the airport and business managers.
- b. Solicit construction proposals from companies within the parish.
- c. Enter into an agreement to build a shell hangar or other building.

Estimated Timeline: High Priority – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014

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### **Oil & Gas Services**

The onset of the recent activity in the Lake Charles region as it becomes a global leader in energy exploration and production with the buildup of the LNG (liquefied natural gas) industry in this area will inevitably create opportunities for the Lafayette region and St. Landry Parish in terms of investment and job creation by companies seeking available land and a talent pool. Targets include construction, transportation/logistics services, banking, food services, laundry services, healthcare, and housing.

#### **Medium Priority Strategic Actions (Current thru 4<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2014)**

**Strategic Action M-2B:** Identify and prepare one site to market to oil & gas services industry for recruitment of additional companies.

Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2014

**Strategic Action M-3B:** Develop a strategy with AEDC for developing business opportunities with Go Group.

Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority – 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014

**Strategic Action M-4B:** Inform area partners (parish and city officials, real estate, property owners, education, tourism, etc.) about potential opportunities and threats given the intelligence gathered over time.

Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority – 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014

**Strategic Action M-5B:** As the regional EDO, Acadiana Economic Development Council will initiate conversation with the Growth Opportunity (Go Group) and the Southwest Region Economic Development Alliance to develop a strategy for working with the group and learn of opportunities for the 7-parish Acadiana region.

Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority – 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014

**Strategic Action M-6B:** Attend regular meetings of the Go Group to keep abreast of activities, development timelines and opportunities.

Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority – 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2014

**Strategic Action M-7B:** Inform area businesses about potential opportunities and threats given the intelligence gathered over time about this sector.

Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority – 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014

## **St. Landry Parish Strategic Economic Development Plan**

### **Commercial Development and Cultural Economy**

Enhance the existing cultural, entertainment and recreation opportunities so that St. Landry Parish becomes a destination for visitors from throughout Louisiana and regional southern states.

#### **Essential Priority Strategic Actions (Immediate Action thru 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2014)**

##### **Strategic Action E-1B: Equestrian Expo Center**

- a. Identify potential sites for the center.
- b. Solicit a feasibility study.
- c. Engage Charlie D'Agostino in the project feasibility study.
- d. Decision on whether to move forward with the project. Viable Project - yes/no
- e. Research and determine a funding mechanism for initial development and long-term sustainability.
- f. Determine management/ownership structure.
- g. Assign a project manager.

Estimated Timeline: Essential Priority – 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2014

##### **Strategic Action E-2B: Racino (Evangeline Downs)**

- a. Engage the Louisiana DOTD to determine the feasibility of access to the property via Cloverleaf exchange at US 190, which would enhance visibility and accessibility.
- b. Develop a master plan for development.
- c. Explore development opportunities for the parish-owned 670 acre tract fronting the service road (restaurants, shopping, etc.) to create a destination development to increase visitors and tax base for the parish.
  - Contact local and national retail developers.
  - Work with LSU in pursuit of developing a nature preserve as a component.
  - Market via St. Landry Economic Development and the St. Landry Parish Visitors Center.

Estimated Timeline: Essential Priority – 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2014

#### **High Priority Strategic Actions (Current thru 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014)**

##### **Strategic Action H-4B: Build upon Arnaudville and the cultural corridor opportunities (French speaking community, French immersion school, arts, CPEX, retail and commercial development, bedroom community).**

- a. Work with Arnaudville and the St. Landry Parish Tourist Center to insure that these aspects are incorporated into the center's marketing/promotion.

Estimated Timeline: High Priority – 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014

## **St. Landry Parish Strategic Economic Development Plan**

### **Medium Priority Strategic Actions (Current thru 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2015)**

**Strategic Action M-8B:** Collaborate with the entities engaged in the cultural economy including the parish, chambers, and tourism center to develop specific strategies for growing the cultural economy.

- a. Develop a cultural district and market for promotion and selling.

Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority – 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014

**Strategic Action M-9B:** In conjunction with the St. Landry Parish Tourism Commission, St. Landry Economic Development will market the cultural economy assets, resources, local festivals, events to attract visitors and attention to the parish.

Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority – 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014

**Strategic Action M-10B:** Assist artists, musicians, farmers, seafood industry, etc. to be entrepreneurs utilizing resources available in the region and state.

- a. Host them at the St. Landry Economic Development Business Center for a forum on available resources to assist them (SBDC, banks, MEPOL, training, etc.) with resources.
- b. Seek their input on their needs and strategies for increasing their capacity to earn a living and build their businesses.

Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2015

### **Food Processing**

Build upon this organically growing industry and the supply network, labor and logistics that are important to attracting this industry sector. Local and/or regional start-ups firms could become a part of this food supplier network.

Estimate Timeline: Medium Priority – 2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr 2014

### **High Priority Strategic Actions (Current thru 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2014)**

**Strategic Action H-5B:** Promote opportunities to local farmers, other area businesses, etc. to develop business opportunities for them to supply this industry.

Estimated Timeline: High Priority – 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2013

## **St. Landry Parish Strategic Economic Development Plan**

### **Medium Priority Strategic Actions (Current thru 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014)**

**Strategic Action M-11B:** Work with the LSU Agriculture Center to catalogue the suppliers and resources in St. Landry Parish, region and state.

Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014

### **Medium Priority Strategic Actions (Current thru 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014)**

**Strategic Action M-12B:** Host a meeting with the existing businesses in this sector to assess their needs and any gaps in supplies that could be generated locally or within the state.

Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014

## **Agriculture**

### **High Priority Strategic Actions (Current thru 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014)**

**Strategic Action H-6B:** Research and partner with LSU Ag Center and USDA to determine upstream and downstream operations – agro chemicals, food processing, supplies/inputs for other industries.

- a. Inventory crop production, available farmland, designated farm acreage in production and other data to show the impact and importance of agriculture to the area.
- b. Identify value-added products that can be produced from area crops.
- c. Find alternative uses for agriculture products such as biofuels, waste, etc.

Estimated Timeline: High Priority – 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014

### **Medium Priority Strategic Actions (Current thru 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014)**

## **Healthcare**

Build upon the growing healthcare sector in St. Landry Parish to insure existing and future needs as well as opportunities for growth.

**Strategic Action M-13B:** Host a healthcare forum with residents and area businesses to determine service gaps as a means to developing a target list of potential healthcare services businesses.

- a. Develop a list of potential types of healthcare service opportunities.

Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority - 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014

## **St. Landry Parish Strategic Economic Development Plan**

### ***C - Business Retention and Expansion***

For communities that are actively seeking to diversify and create sustainable economies, existing businesses are the largest component of employment growth. Determining the growth prospects of existing business is important for future development for St. Landry Parish, but is also an important issue in marketing of the community.

#### **High Priority Strategic Actions (Current thru 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014)**

**Strategic Action H-1C:** Develop a list of companies operating within St. Landry Parish that can be used for business retention and expansion visits and other uses.

*Estimated Timeline: High Priority – 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2014*

**Strategic Action H-2C:** Piggyback with the AEDC to develop a common system for reporting meeting results. This system will help identify trends and concentrations of development issues by geography. The parish council and each municipality should receive the quarterly reports.

*Estimated Timeline: High Priority – High Priority 2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr 2014*

#### **Medium Priority Strategic Actions (Current thru 4<sup>th</sup> Qtr 2014)**

**Strategic Action M-1C:** Organize a series of regular meetings with each of the top employers. The meetings will be performed by staff of the St. Landry Economic Development. The purpose of the calls is to take a proactive approach to uncovering problems that preclude the expansion of these core businesses and determine additional opportunities for growth in the industry sector.

*Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority – 2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr 2014*

**Strategic Action M-2C:** Meet quarterly with the cities and parish to review the report and to monitor progress towards eliminating development obstacles, potential jobs and investment, etc. for existing businesses in St. Landry Parish.

*Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority – 2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr 2014*

**Strategic Action M-3C:** Meet with parish and municipal officials to design a rapid response system for dealing with permitting and site and infrastructure obstacles encountered during meetings with existing companies and prior to visits. The system must have a dedicated point of contact and a timeline and reporting procedure for dealing with significant issues.

*Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority – 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014*

## **St. Landry Parish Strategic Economic Development Plan**

### ***D - Entrepreneurship/Small Business Development***

Business incubators continue to be a viable economic development tool that can energize a community. Incubators can develop companies, create jobs, diversify the economy, increase tax revenue, and provide other economic benefits to a community. A community with a business incubator program can be viewed as progressive and supportive of entrepreneurs and small growth companies if the right programs and services are in place to assist this industry sector. To be a successful incubator, the St. Landry Economic Development Business Center must balance between being a real estate revenue generator and true incubator offering services for startups and small growth companies.

#### **Essential Priority Strategic Actions (Current thru 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2014)**

**Strategic Action E-1D:** Consider a new brand for the St. Landry Economic Development Business Center aligning with St. Landry Economic Development's new brand.

*Estimated Timeline: Essential Priority – 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2014*

**Strategic Action E-2D:** Actively solicit potential tenants that have the ability to create jobs within the business center and therefore mitigate the \$750,000 loan responsibility for St. Landry economic development by turning this into a grant.

*Estimated Timeline: Essential Priority – 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2014*

**Strategic Action E-3D:** Determine the best uses for the St. Landry Economic Development business resource and education center.

*Estimated Timeline: Essential Priority – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014*

#### **High Priority Strategic Actions (Current through 2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr 2014)**

**Strategic Action H-1A:** As part of the marketing/communications plan, promote the business center, area startups and St. Landry Economic Development business center tenant success stories.

*Estimated Timeline: High Priority – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014*

## **St. Landry Parish Strategic Economic Development Plan**

### ***Medium Priority Strategic Actions (Current thru 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014)***

**Strategic Action M-1D:** Track the success of the St. Landry Economic Development entrepreneurship and business services program.

- a. Consult the National Business Incubation Association for guidelines on tracking success.
- b. Determine your own measures of success.

*Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014*

**Strategic Action M-2D:** Build an entrepreneurial ecosystem to encourage startups within the community.

- a. Partner with MEPOL, SBDC, LEDA/AEDC, Acadiana Entrepreneurship Group, LED's Economic Gardening program and other organizations to identify and determine services as well as potential gaps.
- b. Identify business mentors (businesses, ULL and LSU-Eunice alums; teachers, etc.) to work with startups on various aspects of business.
- c. Inventory and seek funding opportunities: SBIR, Opelousas small business fund, small business revolving loan, banks, venture capitalists.
- d. Develop a parish-wide revolving loan program in conjunction with applicable partners that becomes an asset for startup and existing small businesses to obtain working capital dollars.
- e. Start a young professionals group for networking, education, etc.
- f. Research entrepreneurship courses at the tech/community college, LSU, and ULL.
- g. Consult with LEDA, AEDC and other economic development entities in the region and state that have built successful entrepreneurial strategies.

*Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority – 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014*

**Strategic Action M-3D:** Collaborate with LEDA, AEDC and the Opportunity Machine that runs the annual INNOV conference on activities and events that would assist entrepreneurs in furthering their business strategies.

*Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority – 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2014*

**Strategic Action M-4D:** Ongoing assessment of St. Landry Economic Development small business services and needs of the entrepreneurial community through regular meetings and/or surveys.

*Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014*

### E- Community Development

Community development is a broad term given to the practice of building strong and resilient local communities. Community development seeks to empower individuals and groups of people by providing them with the skills and education they need to effect change in their own communities. These skills are often created through the formation of various groups working for a common agenda to affect change.

The key purpose of community development as a priority for St. Landry Economic Development is to provide assistance to the cities in St. Landry Parish to build community capacity and growth opportunities while involving their partners including chambers, civic groups, involved citizens, business owners and others that have a stake in their community's future.

**Goal: Build community capacity and growth opportunities for each city in St. Landry Parish.**

**Short-term Outcome:** Provide resources and education for cities and their stakeholders to prepare for growth opportunities.

**Long-term Outcome:** New investment and jobs and increased tax base.

#### **Essential Priority Strategic Actions (Immediate thru 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014)**

##### **Strategic Action E-1E: Outreach to communities.**

- a. Regular visits to the communities for dialogue and understanding of needs and progress.
- b. Develop a community project wish list through dialogue and meetings with them.
- c. Determine possible funding for priority projects.
- d. Grant writing for projects.

*Estimated Timeline: Essential Priority 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014*

##### **Strategic Action E-2E: Community and economic development technical support, training and best practices.**

- a. Host a series of bi-monthly speaker sessions with cities and their stakeholders throughout the parish.
  - a. Identify potential speakers.
- b. Develop leadership training for a small, core group in each city.
- c. Prepare the communities and host a mock site consultant visit.
  - a. Assist each with guidelines: choosing attendees, material preparation, etc.

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- d. Information clearinghouse: demographics, community profiles, etc.
- e. Act as an advisor on community and economic development issues.
- f. Provide technical assistance to target, obtain and manage funds for projects such as small business revolving loan funds, or façade improvement loans or grants for downtown areas.
- g. Education and training.
- h. Marketing.
- i. E-Newsletter.

*Estimated Timeline: Essential Priority 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014*

### **High Priority Strategic Actions (Current through March 2014)**

**Strategic Action H-1E: Market each of the communities in the parish on their strengths and priorities through all marketing/communications channels.**

- A. Buildings and sites
- B. Community profiles
- C. Tourism assets

*Estimated Timeline: High Priority 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014*

**Strategic Action H-2E: Assist the communities in improving their overall attractiveness.**

- a. Work with each city to plan an attractive entryway into the city whether it is located in central downtown or immediately upon entering the city.
- b. Help the city develop a beautification program with participation from residents.
- c. Develop a blight program to clear out dilapidated buildings.
- d. Keep Your City Clean Program.
  - a. Best Practices: Eagle Eye mobile app through the Sheriff's Department (Lake Charles). Keep Litter Louisiana (grants).
  - b. Outreach to kids in school and their parents on the importance of community pride.
  - c. Signs around town encouraging no littering.
  - d. Façade improvements (historic tax credits; mainstreet, LA office of tourism)

*Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority – 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014*

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### Medium Priority Strategic Actions 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014 – 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2015

**Strategic Action M-1E:** Help institute a “concierge” business-friendly model to implement in each city for new or expanding businesses in the community.

- a. Provide guidelines and best practices for developing a seamless process:
  - a. Permitting
  - b. Utility services and hookups
  - c. Other city services
  - d. Welcome to Our City welcoming group
  - e. Guide on area resources

*Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority – 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2015*

### **Retirement Community**

The U.S. population is living longer and there are many years after work retirement to enjoy life. Louisiana has been a draw for retirees for its quality of life, activities, attractions and cost of living. A U.S. News & World Report blog outlined what retirees are seeking in a community: low cost of living, planned living communities with smaller housing options, healthcare services, culture/recreation, continuing education, quality of life, public transportation, good weather, low taxes, and access to amenities nearby.

### Medium Priority Strategic Actions (Current thru 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014)

**Strategic Action M-2E:** Assess the potential retiree market for St. Landry Parish and communities by meeting with the Lt. Governor’s Office of Culture, Recreation and Tourism through RetireLouisianaInStyle.com state officials.

*Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority – 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014*

**Strategic Action M-3E:** Examine best practices in retirement community development to determine where amenity-rich retirement communities can be developed in St. Landry Parish.

*Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority – 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014*

**NOTE:** It is recommended that a more detailed assessment of retirement assets and features be developed prior to launching any dedicated effort in this regard. Our overview suggests that the active recruitment of retirees is possible but a host of additional information and analysis on the housing market, recreational features, festival & events, and educational offerings should be developed before a program is launched.

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### **F- Marketing/Communications**

Marketing/Communications is a vital component of the St. Landry Economic Development strategic plan to promote and enhance awareness of the assets, strengths and offerings for new business opportunities and to improve the perception of St. Landry Parish as a place in which to live and operate a business. Successful marketing campaigns are most effective by implementing a coordinated strategy, at a targeted market segment, and with partners in the parish, region and state. The purpose is to engage new opportunities that will strengthen the parish's economic base and grow the prosperity of the community while maintaining its quality of life standards.

***Goal: Promote and market St. Landry Parish and St. Landry Economic Development activities in every marketing/communications medium, i.e. website, news media, marketing materials, press releases, e-newsletter, social media, YouTube, word-of-mouth, and public meetings. Marketing should be conducted internally to parish, cities, partners and businesses, and externally to targeted companies, site consultants, partners, realtors, and developers.***

***Short-term Outcome:*** Enhanced image of St. Landry Parish in the minds of local, regional, state and national markets as well as partners and stakeholders within the parish.

***Long-term Outcome:*** New investment and jobs and increased tax base.

#### **Essential Priority Strategic Actions (Current thru 2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr 2014)**

**Strategic Action E-1F:** Develop a comprehensive website to promote St. Landry Parish's strengths and assets to the target industries, site consultants, existing companies, as well as a tool for local cities in the parish. Include relevant data for site location analysis, buildings and sites, incentives, community profiles, workforce and education, business incubator, market access, strategic plan, tourism, and links to relevant resources. Keep the site updated with news & information, progress to goals, on-line forms, video, etc. so visitors will want or need to return.

*Estimated Timeline: Essential Priority – 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2014*

**Strategic Action E-2F:** Utilize the new St. Landry Economic Development brand for all marketing and communications tools as well as the new strategic agenda.

*Estimated Timeline: Essential Priority – 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2014*

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**Strategic Action E-3F:** Schedule speaking engagements at local meetings of various civic organizations to educate people about the nature of the local economic development and marketing program and its progress and results.

- a. Develop an internal list for targeted marketing partners, businesses, and externally to targeted companies, site consultants, partners, realtors, and developers.
- b. Meet and communicate with them regularly about St. Landry Economic Development and St. Landry Parish activities.
- c. Host an annual state of the parish economy event.
- d. Conduct an annual site visit of the parish for economic development officials in the state, region and partners in order to educate them on what St. Landry Parish has to offer.

*Estimated Timeline: Essential Priority – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014*

**Strategic Action E-4F:** Partner with AEDC to host a site visit with real estate, developers, private property owner, banks, and construction and service firms to view sites and the parish's assets firsthand and learn about St. Landry Economic Development's economic development plans as a source of leads. Have regular contact with them to nurture these relationships.

*Estimated Timeline: Essential Priority – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014*

### **High Priority Strategic Actions (Current thru 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014)**

**Strategic Action H-1F:** Incorporate properties into AEDC's the Louisiana Site Selection Center sites and buildings database.

*Estimated Timeline: High Priority – 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2014*

**Strategic Action:** Identify key community leaders that will participate in a prospect site visit and educate them by conducting a mock site visit so they will be prepared when a real visit occurs.

*Estimated Timeline: High Priority – 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2014*

**Strategic Action H-2F:** Develop and maintain an in-house web-based database to keep a current inventory of vacant buildings and prepared sites within the parish. Reach out to real estate firms, private land owners, and others to inventory available property for inclusion.

*Estimated Timeline: High Priority – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014*

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**Strategic Action H-3F:** Develop a Business Ambassador group to promote St. Landry Parish locally and in their business travels (develop specific message).

*Estimated Timeline: High Priority – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014*

### **Medium Priority Strategic Actions (Current thru 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014)**

**Strategic Action M-1F:** Proactively market St. Landry Parish at trade shows in partnership with AEDC, conferences (Site Selection Guild, IEDC, SEDC, LIDEA, ICSC), e-newsletter, partners, and personal visits.

- a. Develop an internal “think positive” campaign (similar to Sulphur, LA Think Positive, be Positive Campaign) to promote the good things going on in St. Landry Parish. Utilize parish, regional and state partners for news stories.
- b. Create target industry fact sheets featuring data & information about the industry to convey why St. Landry Parish is an advantage for a business operation.
- c. Develop a general-purpose brochure including demographics, photos of buildings & sites, transportation access, and other assets of the parish.
- d. Utilize the marketing flyers from AEDC’s database in the marketing package with available buildings & sites.
- e. Develop a column in The Daily World on St. Landry Economic Development activities, success stories in the parish, etc.

*Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014*

**Strategic Action M-2F:** Take a systematic approach to networking and partnering with such agencies as the state economic development agency (LED), Entergy Louisiana, CLECO, SLEMCO, chambers, real estate brokers, site location consultants, and others as appropriate.

*Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014*

## **G - Workforce Development/Education**

Having an available skilled and educated workforce is in the top three site location factors for businesses looking to expand into another location. St. Landry Parish needs to insure that there is a talent pool to meet current and future needs. St. Landry Parish businesses expressed the importance of focusing on education as a means to providing a workforce and a quality of living for its residents. Collaboration with employers, K-12 and higher education, and parish partners is key to meeting employer needs while also insuring job opportunities for parish residents.

## **St. Landry Parish Strategic Economic Development Plan**

**Goal:** *Enhance the education level and workforce skills of residents to create a talent pool for existing and new business and to also provide job opportunities for parish residents for now and into the future.*

**Short-term Outcome:** Engaged partners throughout the parish and region with a plan to address the workforce and education issues.

**Long-term Outcome:** Plentiful jobs opportunities for educated and trained St. Landry Parish residents and a talent pool from which existing and new businesses can draw from.

### **Strategic Action E-1G: Engage students in various aspects of economic and community development.**

- a. Develop a leadership program whereby students are educated once a month:
  - a. St. Landry Economic Development board; parish council meeting; site tour of the parish's assets (port, sites, higher education, etc.); website maintenance interns; Business of the Year Award, community training; entrepreneurship, etc.
  - b. Actively support a paid student internship program for St. Landry Parish Economic Development. (TH Harris and LSU-Eunice)
  - c. Identify and actively participate in scholarship related programs for students at TH Harris and LSU-Eunice.

*Estimated Timeline: High Priority – 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2014*

### **High Priority Strategic Actions (Current thru 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014)**

**Strategic Action H-1G:** Act as a liaison between area workforce development providers and existing businesses to ensure local employers are aware of available training resources. Additionally, the economic developer should communicate the needs of local business to workforce development and training providers.

*Estimated Timeline: High Priority – 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2014*

**Strategic Action H-2G:** Encourage existing industry to develop career tracts for employees so they can increase the skills of existing workers.

- a. Insure employers are aware of state training funds and workforce development training at the SLCC campuses.

*Estimated Timeline: High Priority – 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014*

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### ***Medium Priority Strategic Actions (Current thru 4<sup>th</sup> Qtr 2014)***

**Strategic Action M-1G:** Promote success stories occurring in the St. Landry Parish public education system.

- a. Gather stories from schools and other partners.
- b. St. Landry Economic Development web site, e-newsletter, businesses, etc.

*Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014*

**Strategic Action M-2G:** Engage businesses to be sponsors and mentors for public education students beginning as early as the 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

- a. Develop a program along with the workforce/education task force and public education system.

*Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014*

**Strategic Action M-3G:** Research and present some best practices options for possible public education system programs and assistance to enhance student learning and skills.

- a. Introduce the “Leader in Me” program developed by Stephen Covey to build confidence and leadership skills in public education.
- b. Stand For Children (Baton Rouge, New Orleans, and Baker).
- c. Louisiana Chapter of the Black Alliance for Educational Opportunities (BAEO).

*Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2014*

**Strategic Action M-4G:** Promote technical certifications, training, associates degrees, and dual enrollment in K-12 beginning as early as 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

*Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority – 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014*

**Strategic Action M-5G:** As part of the St. Landry Economic Development business industry/advisory group (created under Economic Development), form an education/workforce development committee to collaborate with SLCC and K-12 on training, certification and degree programs and promotion of job and training opportunities within the parish. The focus should be on meeting employer needs while also providing opportunities for residents. Oil & gas services, healthcare technical positions, maintenance mechanics and processors, construction, Lake Charles LNG opportunities, tourism (tour guides, hotels, restaurants) technicians, maintenance, operators (Alon).

*Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority – 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014*

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**Strategic Action M-6G:** Work with the K-12 public school system to incorporate technical training in high school.

*Estimated Timeline: Medium Priority – 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014*

### X. Conclusion

***If you develop a strong mission, a strong plan and have strong leadership, the organization will succeed every time. Clark Smith, Partner Smart Solutions Group***

#### **The New, New St. Landry Economic Development**

From our time spent developing this strategic plan for St. Landry Economic Development, working with its community and economic development partners, we concluded that this is a new day for the organization.....a new executive director, new brand and a first-time strategic economic development plan to focus and guide the priorities for building community capacity and economic growth in St. Landry Parish.

Being new is a positive position for St. Landry Economic Development as newness garners attention and provides an opportunity for improving the way business is conducted, enhancing the image of St. Landry Parish in the minds of its stakeholders (citizens, public officials, collaborators, allies and externally to the site location and business community), developing the product needed to attract business, and building upon new opportunities.

According to Louisiana Economic Development Secretary Stephen Moret, the next 3 to 5 years in south Louisiana will be a “boom time” for the state with the opportunities in the oil and gas sector. Lauren Scott recently reported that the state has \$94 billion in capital expenditure projects scheduled to move forward very soon. This type of new growth is unprecedented for Louisiana and should signal considerable opportunity for St. Landry parish given its geographic location and strong Highway transportation infrastructure. It will be critical for St. Landry parish to prepare with some sense of urgency to not only promote, but to welcome this growth across such large geographic area.

These combined particulars present an unprecedented opportunity for St. Landry Economic Development to have a significant impact on the parish and its ability to grow the economy.

#### **Suggestions for Effective Plan Implementation**

The strategic plan prepares and guides St. Landry Economic Development by focusing on five major goals and over 50 strategic actions to accomplish the goals. While regional and instate collaboration is essential to carrying out the plan, the organization can truly only rely on the resources it has at its

## **St. Landry Parish Strategic Economic Development Plan**

disposal (staff, budget, time, facilities, leadership) in order to affect meaningful progress and success over a 3 to 5 year time period.

St. Landry Parish is a rural parish with the exception of Opelousas and Eunice and the smaller communities in parishes of this scope rely on the expertise and guidance of parish economic development organizations to provide resources, education, guidance and support of priority projects. The parish has some unique opportunities to bring these communities into the spotlight.

We suggest that St Landry Parish Economic Development strongly consider adding a Community Development Specialist to work with each of the communities to build community capacity as this is a high priority and essential to the success of this plan and the St. Landry Parish economic activity. This position would implement the Community Development priorities of the plan to build community capacity, provide outreach and services such as grant writing, education and facilitation on various issues. This individual will also play a role in building and enhancing existing industry relationships and assist with expansion projects.

We might also suggest that a thorough evaluation be done with the responsibilities assigned to the position, which is now the secretary/receptionist. With the right training or the right person in this place assigned to make a difference in actively engaging in some of the many strategic priorities that have been identified in this plan there may be potential to expand not only the position capacity but further the goal of achievement for the agency.

Education and training in the field of community and economic development should be a practice for St. Landry Economic Development as it will enhance the organization's effectiveness and recognition as a true player in the industry. This includes the staff, board, communities and volunteers that all have a role and responsibility in the organization to promote effective economic development.

Lastly, we suggest St. Landry Economic Development research best practices on the potential for additional fundraising opportunities associated with the 501c3.

### **Next Steps**

The next step for St. Landry Economic is determining the most appropriate way to implement the strategic economic development plan. It's a matter of what tools the organization might have in place that are already working to keep on top of priorities, timelines, and responsible persons for projects and track progress. We recommend a work plan that fits into the everyday operation of the organization.

St. Landry Economic Development should check successes off the work plan list and applaud by communicating within and outside of St. Landry Parish. It should measure success with a quarterly trends report and annual economic impact report to the parish including a state of the economy forum.

## **St. Landry Parish Strategic Economic Development Plan**

St. Landry Economic Development should review the plan on at least a quarterly basis to “plan, do, check and adjust” as needed according to changes that may be occurring in the operating and economic environment.