

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 youth.

# **Executive Directors Report**

### **Table of Contents**

I – Business Center/Small Business Update

II – Communications

III - Property Development

IV - Projects

V – Area and Regional Development Items

VI - Community Development

VI \_ Training Opportunities

VIII \_ Conclusion

# I - Business Center/Small Business Update

Work within the Business Center on items related to the LBIA Grant Award is in the final stages. The installation of a central HVAC system in the warehouse office suite is now complete. The work on the upgrades of the A/C to the north side of the building is now complete. We also have computer systems upgrades that have been completed under the grant, as well as a new sound system in the community and business education area. Work on installing a fan vent system for the attic to the front of the Business Center, as well as the warehouse will be complete by the 10<sup>th</sup> of June to allow for final processing of the all the grants related paperwork. We also intend to install some protective poles around the a/c system recently installed on the north side of the building to protect it from damages for automobiles parking on that side.

The executive committee entertained ideas for consideration of additional building improvements/upgrades to be considered as a request for the next LBIA Grant. This is of course in consideration of the program being funded for FY2016 through the LED Budget.

The ownership of the Business Center is in its final stages of formally being transferred from GOEIDC to SLED per contractual agreement. GOEIDC had a formal board meeting on 05/15 and completed on the necessary processes and paperwork. The Office of Community Development in Baton Rouge has a final check/punch list to be completed. They anticipate this list will be done by May 22<sup>nd</sup>.

We have the following tenant activity at the Business Center:

As of May 1<sup>st</sup> we have the following businesses/spaces being occupied.

**C&C** Painting and Pressure Washing

**Excellent Drivers Academy** 

Boone Speech and Learning Services

Miracle Ear

Happy Housemaids

Magnolia Community Development Corporation

Victory Manufacturing (Potential June 1st)

L&Z Medical Technology LLC (Potential June 1st)

### **II – Communications**

We continue to explore and work on ways to further enhance the brand image of SLED and SLP by continuing to refine our overall progressive image through <a href="https://www.opportunitystlandry.com">www.opportunitystlandry.com</a>. We have had numerous strategic sessions with our public relations partners to look at ways to proactively build on this initiative. As always, we are looking for ways that truly highlight the collaboration and good things in St Landry. We anticipate more of this specific initiative being presented in the June Board Meeting.

The perception of a quality education within any given area is always a key consideration to not only existing and prospective families, but also to existing and prospective businesses. We have recently brought together key leaders from our education entities across the parish in a professionally facilitated strategic planning session with the following question to be answered: How can we create a core web tool as part of Opportunitystlandry.com/education that will be a continuous and value added source of information that promotes the "good" stories within St. Landry Education. As a result of our strategic we have the responsibilities assigned to move the initiative forward. As follow-on to this planning session all key stakeholders will reconvene in late mid to late June to review the information provided in an agreed upon template structure. This information will form the core for the roll out planned in August 2015.

As we have discussed briefly, we are looking for a state of the art GIS platform as part of our overall parish web presence. As part of our regular board agenda we will look at one the most progressive products on the market to be the catalyst of this effort. Again, this initiative will be a growing collaborative effort with some of the key entities forming the "face" of SLP efforts, which would be above any efforts already done at the regional level.

We are still exploring technical options for implementation of a social media, "wiki" style updating systems and other progressive tools that can enhance our "progressive" web presence.

### **III - Property Development (**Large-scale)

We continue, along with other key stakeholders and leaders on outreach and incentive structuring along our major transportation corridors. This effort will tie into the agenda item of policy on taxing districts. With having active projects being discussed at 4 major interchanges on the I-49 corridor our consideration towards support in this development continues to become more pressing. It is also worth noting that all the interchanges on the I-49 that are be worked on will also have an enhanced scope of development beyond the specific project that is being listed. To clarify; the project being listed will serve as the anchor and if successful these projects will bring additional information in behind them. Fountain, Expo, Outpost (B) and Lid all have large scale property development considerations that have the ability to affect beyond the anchor tenants on these projects.

Work continues with LED, as well as the newly formed team of 1 Acadiana and a new team brought forth by major utility providers that is focused on site certification. We are optimistic that this renewed support with more targeted emphasis will help in not only identifying quality sites, but finding property owners, or ownership groups that are willing to consider a sale, or an option to sell.

# **IV Projects Update**

# Summary: 17 Active, 7 Announced (Lift, New Announcement), 2 Parked (Pacific, Service)

**Project Amber** – This project is continues to fall into the pending category of rail upgrades in the Opelousas Industrial Park. It is part of the picture of a rail master plan, which has multiple partners in discussion as part of the planning process. If successful this project could create up to 10 full time positions.

**Project Bayou –** This is a retail recruitment project targeted for the center of the parish. The company is continuing their due diligence process now. The property being considered was recently approved for annexation, which was an essential step. Although there have been some delays because of infrastructure we still expect a definite direction on this project in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2015. If successful this project could create up to 55 direct full time positions.

**Project Code** – This is a new expansion project focused on light manufacturing looking to locate on the main transportation corridor in the center of the Parish. The challenges with this project continues to be site location along the I-49 Corridor. The executive team is willing to move quickly if the right property can be acquired. If successful the project could create up to 20 full time positions.

**Project Lynx (Formally Cloak)** – There continues to be very positive developments and discussions with key players through a recently conducted site visit to the Parish, as well as the project moving through its permitting process. This is potentially a very large project that would be done in phases. Information on the initial phases could be available for release in the as soon as the next 30 days. This project could potentially create in excess of 60 direct full time positions, but could potentially have an unprecedented economic impact in the parish.

**Project Crude** –There are meetings with this project schedule for the 19<sup>th</sup> of May. While the project is somewhat dependent on the crude oil market this corporate leadership is still looking for ways to move forward. This project could potentially create in excess of 12 direct full time positions

**Project Expo** – An update on some of the high level activities associate with this project will be provided for on the regular board meeting agenda.

**Project Focus –** This is a large scope project dealing with historic properties in the center and northern parts of the parish. This project is primarily event driven so the number of jobs created would vary and some of the positions would be good pay, but

only part time by project. Some changes in municipal leadership positions may help to give this project some additional momentum. A large part of the future of this project hinges on the legislative environment in Baton Rouge and their willingness to provide for targeted industry tax incentives. With this in mind, there will not likely be a company commitment towards any new project until late in June pending the session close.

**Project Fountain –** This is a large scale commercial development project that discussions have been ongoing for some time. A master plan for the project is conceptually in place and there are now some key negotiations taking place between the major stakeholders for this project. This project, if successful, could have a legacy impact on the parish, as well as the region, through the capital expenditure and job creation resulting from the development.

**Project Lid –** This project is a manufacturer looking to locate along one of our key transportation corridors. The company has entered into a purchase agreement on the property and is closing in on the final stages of their due diligence process. Barring any unforeseen setbacks, they still anticipate closing on the property in the next 30 to 45 days. It is possible this that this project could begin construction as soon as Oct 2015. If successful, this project could relocate up to 100 immediate jobs and the addition of an extra 75 full time direct positions to the parish for a total of 175 positions.

**Project Lot –** This project is the expansion of an existing parish company into construction at new location and the further modification and refit of their existing facility within the parish. The property for expansion is now under contract and due diligence is in the final stages. Under the current schedule, the project would go into construction in September 2015. Assuming the existing facility backfills the same number of positions in its new use this project would create 45 new direct full time positions. The existing location now has approximately 25 full time positions.

**Project Mat** – This project directly ties back into Project Roto. The company is one of the suppliers in their system and is very interested in starting an additional location on site. This is yet again another project that is going to rely heavily on the rail transportation plan for Opelousas Industrial Park. It is also important to note this project is impacted by drilling activities, which timing will bear out with the schedule of rail upgrades vs. the current oil/gas market. If successful, this project could potentially create in excess of 40 direct full time positions.

**Project Neighbor** – This is a medium size retail location project on the western side of the parish. The project is working through permitting and due diligence. Assuming there are no unexpected items found in this process this project could be set to announce soon. If successful, this project could create in excess of 55 direct full time positions and construction will likely commence this calendar year.

**Project Outpost (A) -** The national tenant is in under contract and in the due diligence stage on one site located on Hwy 190. The company is in its final stages of due diligence. All indications are that the project will move forward. If successful this project could create up to 25 - 30 direct full time positions.

**Project Outpost (B)** This national tenant has entered into a purchase contract agreement on a 2<sup>nd</sup> site location along a high profile transportation corridor within the Parish. The 800k EDA Grant for this project that was submitted for infrastructure upgrades was not successful. This project will be a part of the regular agenda item discussing the use of the increment finance policy that was approved last month. If successful, this project could create up to 40 full time positions for the anchor, as well as many additional positions in outlying parcel developments.

**Project Slip –** This project deals with a major effort with a regional employer who is looking to further expand their transportation/distribution footprint in St Landry Parish. The project is now in its final stages and we anticipate a confirmation in the next 15 - 20 days. Exact job expansion and creation numbers are still not available on this project

**Project Spin –** This project is a light industrial application looking for relocation and support getting established in this area with high demand labor force. We are also looking at the potential to provide initial support to this project through the lease of the warehouse area in the business center. The final potential for this project should become clear over the next 30 days.

**Project Shield –** Company executives continue to work through options, both temporary and permanent, for their head-quarters relocation. We still have not been able to secure availability to the "right" piece of property with the required transportation access. We anticipate a sit down with their executive team in the next week to discuss what appears to be a final option for a site within the parish. If successful, this project could bring up to 400 direct positions in St Landry Parish.

**Project Lift – Announced Recruitment -** This project was formally announced over the weekend. The company Air Evac Lifeteam will be basing rotary wing operations out of the St Landry Parish Airport. They are completing significant upgrades to one of the existing facilities and now have aircraft on the ground to assume operations. This successful project further highlights the huge upside for the SLP Airport, which tends to get overlooked as a key transportation asset of St Landry Parish. This project is anticipated to create 16 direct full time positions.

**Project Strip – Announced Expansion -** This is a large commercial project on a large multi-tenant commercial facility located on the I-49 Service road corridor, St Landry Plaza. The company, Rock Step Capital, made a formal announcement earlier this month through their President, My Andy Wiener. He pledged to bring as many as 8 new national tenants to the facility over the next 2 years. This project could allow for up to 75 direct full time and a greater number of part time employees.

**Project Essen** - **Announced Expansion** Crest Industries, based in Pineville, Louisiana, will invest \$5 million to develop a new cutting, machining and fabrication facility in Eunice and add new machining centers to existing PCS equipment. Crest will retain 18 PCS jobs, and the expansion project will create 20 new jobs averaging \$50,000 per year, plus benefits. LED estimates the investment will result in an additional 24 indirect jobs, for a total of 44 new jobs in the Acadiana Region.

**Project Rip** – **Announced Recruitment** - This Company, Top Timber, deals with the timber hardwood related processing. It is located to the rear of S&B Sawmill in the proximity of the Wal-Mart Distribution Center. The company had indicated that it could initially employ up to 12 full time positions with the potential to grow very quickly if certain international agreements can be established.

**Project Roto – Announced Expansion -** This is an existing company within the Parish, Noble Plastics that has acquired the Yahoo building to begin production of additional plastics components through a process call roto mold plastics production. There is a good potential that this project would bring in a partner supplier, Project Mat. This project will initially create 15 or less direct full time positions, but has a great potential for future expansion.

**Project Alon – Announced Expansion -** The Alon Refinery has recently completed an expansion at their facility to include the building of a rail transfer facility that will allow them more efficiently loading on and off load bulk rail materials to be utilized both in and out of their production facility. The project will create as many as 12 full time positions.

**Project Runway – Announced Recruitment:** A formal announcement was made for this project Thursday, February 20<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 PM at their new construction site just past Beau Chene High School. We conducted a follow-up site visit last week. There is solid progress on the foundation structure, which is the most time consuming portion of their building process. The company expects operations to commence in a matter of weeks. This project will create as many as 25 direct full time positions.

**Project Martin – Announced Expansion:** Bayou State Lumber Company, LLC, formerly known as Acadiana Hardwood, LLC. This company will create 29 permanent new jobs and retain 21. This mill is the only viable employment opportunity for most individuals in the area.

### V – Area and Regional Development Items:

With the assistance of some of our board members, we continue to make significant strides in finding ways to meaningfully engage the Ag Community of SLP. We are currently vetting through a proposal to support the development of an agriculture incubator in SLP that would be using hydroponics techniques as its core curriculum.

Collaboration efforts with the St. Landry Chamber of Commerce board are moving forward at multiple levels. We are exploring in detail the potential for additional formal collaboration in order to collectively be able to create greater value for SLP businesses.

Our work with SLP Tourism also continues to move forward. We regularly attend their monthly board meetings to provide some of the latest updates in economic development to their board, as well as further explore joint collaboration opportunities. We also continue to regularly collaborate on regional and state priorities important to the cultural economy of SLP, both through our Cornerstone collaboration, as well as other areas.

Multiple BERG collaboration meetings have been held over the past twelve weeks. We have met with the following companies:

- Wal-Mart Distribution Center
- Alon Refinery Krotz Springs
- Savoie's
- Tony Chachere's
- Bayou State Lumber
- Cal- Chlor
- Riceland Crawfish
- International Snubbing Services (ISS)
- Sunland Construction
- Ventura Foods.
- Dominique Stock Yards
- Dixie Storage
- Noble Plastics

We received confirmation this week that an application we submitted on behalf of Noble Plastics for the Governors Lantern Awards, which highlights statewide excellence in manufacturing, was a winning selection. The company will be presented the formal Lantern Award by the Governor on June 16<sup>th</sup> in a ceremony at the Governor's Mansion. This is a very notable and well-deserved honor for a great SLP Company!

There have been very positive recent developments for SLCC and TH Harris Campus. The recent announcement of their formal partnership with the JS Clark Academy Dual Enrollment Program highlights some of the progressive leadership within the SLCC structure. We anticipate that this will only be the beginning of a renewed focus on building value into both of the TH Harris campuses in SLP.

Efforts are ongoing by the LSU Board of Advisors as they refine their search for a new Chancellor. This search is now in its final phase and continues to move forward with some very solid candidates being considered. The formal date for the current Chancellor to retire is July 1<sup>st</sup>.

Through GOEIDC proceeds we will be supporting an Annual Economic Development scholarship to the LSU-E foundation. We are also continuing to actively support their leadership development program. The core of this program is the students that attended last month's Industrial board meeting.

In continuing support of youth and education, we recently had a significant positive impact with a presentation given to the Parish FFA Chapter in their annual meeting that was held at Port Barre High School.

The capital outlay requests are moving towards their final deadline of June 11<sup>th</sup> so every day in the legislature at this point is critical. Senator Guillory and Representative Thierry

and are working very hard to keep our EDD request front and center in the consideration process.

We continue to offer assistance and active participation in multiple areas to the Parish President in helping to support the Acadiana Planning Commission, APC. The strategic portion of this effort is being spearheaded by the South Central Planning and Development District (SCPDD).

We also continue to collectively work on regional priorities through ARA (Acadiana Regional Alliance) which is and additional component of the 1 Acadiana effort to bring a collective voice together to enhance regional economic and community development efforts.

AEDC (Acadiana Economic Development Council/1 Acadiana Update):

The AEDC staff has formally been incorporated into the business development structure of One Acadiana. While the AEDC board remains intact, it is likely that there will be a phased transition in entirety for its structure and assets to One Acadiana.

As a reminder, some recent significant milestones of OA development includes:

Meeting the 3 Million dollar annual fundraising objective on a 5 year commitment

Hiring of a regional business development executive

Hiring of a regional redevelopment executive

A recent collaboration that hosted a Site Selectors Guild that brought respected site consultants in from around the country to look at and hear more about what Acadiana as a whole has to offer.

As a regional economic development they have been active in participating in and following the priorities for Louisiana Association of Business and Industry, (LABI) and their priorities in this legislative session. Their priorities for business this year are to:

Make sure transportation is a priority

Continue to improve the legal tort environment that is detrimental to business

Workforce Development Focus

### VI - Community Development in St Landry Parish

Ardyn Co is well into the process of providing a business plan that focuses on the Cultural Economy of Arnaudville, which includes the potential alternative usage of St Luke's Hospital. We are formally part of the steering committee for this effort. The final report is intended to be complete by July 15<sup>th</sup> of this year.

We are reaching out to, along with the Parish President, to each of the newly elected Mayor's in the parish to start the discussion on identifying their priorities and looking for ways where we can provide support. One of the items on this month's agenda, using the policy on taxing district support that we approved last month, is a direct result of these discussions.

We are still looking at ways to work with SCPDD/APC and leadership in Eunice about moving forward with updating a comprehensive plan and a follow up action plan to move strategic priorities forward. While there have been some temporary setbacks within the decision making authorities we will continue to offer leadership any assistance possible to move forward in a proactive manner.

The St. Landry Professionals hosted its first official Membership Meeting the evening of April 23<sup>rd</sup> in which over 15 individuals were in attendance. A presentation was provided which included the organizational structure and vision for the future of the SLP as well as brief introductions and words of encouragement from our Parish President and Executive Director of SLED. On May 30<sup>th</sup> SLP hosted its first Coffee With... series with the newly elected Mayor of Opelousas, Reginald Tatum. The event provided SLP members a unique opportunity to speak directly with Mayor Tatum. Through the hour long discussion such topics discussed included city infrastructure, improvements upon local parks and city services. Our Coffee With...series is an occurrence which will take place monthly with the next event scheduled for June 2<sup>nd</sup> with Mayor Moody of Eunice, La. To date the SLP has doubled in paid membership from that 7 to a total of 16 with continuous growth seen as inevitably.

We continue to provide attendance and support to the Steamboat City Association in Washington to work on various community development initiatives. The Dejean Church, located near the corner of Veterans Memorial and Church Street will soon be home to an art gallery. The Historic Washington Art Gallery will operate as a subsidiary of the Steamboat Association with its purpose as "to promote culture and to advance the study and appreciation of art in the local community; to provide a venue for artistic works, expression, creativity and personal development and to create an atmosphere for diverse social interaction." At the present time there is a waiting list of artists looking to lease space within the building and are moving toward at least a "soft" opening of the long-discussed art gallery in conjunction with the antique mall event second weekend in April. Lastly, Washington is approaching the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its settlement which will be in year 2020. The theme for the Tricentennial will be "Come Home to Washington." A resolution was recently adopted by the Washington Town Council in support of a Tricentennial theme and contest.

Downtown Opelousas continues to move forward with infill development. New traffic signal light pole installation for ten intersections in the City of Opelousas, which includes seven that feature painted black poles and arm masts around the downtown historic district area is nearing completion. Their tourism department is now actively working with business owners now for new rounds of grant opportunities.

Additional upcoming projects include downtown curb and sidewalk enhancement work though a Louisiana Transportation Alternative Program grant, way-finding signage work for the historic district area, historic plaques for some of the buildings located in the city's National Historic District, which is the two block area around the Courthouse Square and proposed new street signs for the city's historic district areas. Various considerations for these aesthetic improvements are being evaluated at this time.

The City of Opelousas is in the planning stages to launch a citywide youth soccer program as envisioned within the City of Opelousas Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Our Economic Development Specialist, due to her collegiate soccer experience, has been working closely with Opelousas Parks and Recreation as well as the committee chairman, Yvonne Normand on presenting best practices as it relates to league design and coordination and will also serve as lead instructor for the soccer clinic. The committee chair anticipates the first season to begin in spring of 2016.

### **Grants Update:**

A \$25,000 LBIA Grant to be used for the Business Center at an 80/20 match. The total grant application for this grant is \$30,355 due to the match requirement. We are currently nearing the 90% mark on grant expenditures used to date. We anticipate that all funds in this grant will be expensed by the deadline of June 30, 2015.

USDA RBEG Grant; by the Delta Regional Authority was approved and funded by USDA Rural Development, National Office, Washington, D.C., contingent upon change of ownership of the business center. The funds from this grant are contingent on the change of ownership of the Business Center, but are still obligated for use. This is subject to short change on deobligation, but as of last week these funds are still obligated for the Business Center.

We continue to work closely with the SCPDD/ARA on the potential for grant funding for rail upgrades designed to support Project Roto, Project Mat, Project Crude, Project Amber. The key with this grant is going to be the rail master plan for the Opelousas Industrial Park, which Morgan Godeau and Associates is currently working on. It is important that any upgrades meet the long term needs of the park and the area rather than just being reactive to situations as they arise.

The EDA 70/30 grant application to provide utility infrastructure development suitable for Project Outpost (B) plus additional development capacity at the site. This grant was submitted on March 11<sup>th</sup>. Unfortunately, there was the ability to fund 10 of 30 applications and this grant was not approved for the current funding cycle. We anticipate using the new Increment Finance Policy to help move this project forward in lieu of the grant.

### VII – Training Opportunities

The following are the closest proximity basic economic development training courses remaining for 2015.

True South Basic Economic Development Course, Sept 21 - 24, 2015

Location: Hattiesburg, MS

### VIII - Conclusion

There are big current economic factors that could cause concern for the Acadiana Economy in the minds of many people over the near term. Not the least of which is the current downturn in the oil industry and its potential impact on this area, as well as the impact of the state budget in broad scope. Our legislators are firmly entrenched in one of the most challenging state budget scenarios present in recent memory. With these kinds of concerns on peoples mind it perhaps more important than ever for us to be the "Can Do" voice for the Parish and to continue to take a leading role in the Acadiana Economy. I personally want to thank all of you for being such an integral part of making good things happen for other people! With your support we will dramatically expand opportunities, growth, and positive impact across St Landry Parish throughout this year and beyond!!