



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

## **Executive Directors Report**

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

Work within the Business Center on items related to the LBIA Grant Award has been completed. This work has included:

The installation of a central HVAC system in the warehouse office suites.

Upgrades to the A/C on the north side of the building.

Computer systems upgrades

New sound system in the community and business education area.

Installation of a fan vent system for the attic in the front of the Business Center, as well as vent fans for the warehouse.

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 tentative 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 still has a final check/punch list to be completed. We hope to receive their finalized version any day.

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 (Spin)

## **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 [www.opportunitystlandry.com](http://www.opportunitystlandry.com). We are now finalizing information collected in multiple strategic sessions with our public relations partners to look at ways to proactively build on this initiative. We anticipate more of this initiative being presented in the July Board Meeting. A big basis for this effort is truly building on the collaboration of leadership and the positives in SLP.

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](http://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 early July 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.

We had a solid planning session yesterday to identify the implementation process for putting in the base GIS platform that will be part of the backbone for our overall parish web presence. 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 outreach and incentive planning along our major transportation corridors. Significant work has gone on this month on using taxing districts as a means to help communities upgrade infrastructure capacity along the major I-49 exits. We currently have active projects at four major interchanges on the I-49 corridor that 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, 3 Pending Announcement, (Bayou, Spin, Lid) 1 Pending Park (Shield)**

**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. This project is moving forward and should announce in the next two weeks. 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 top level corporate officials representing this project. This is 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 through capital investment and follow-on jobs created in additional phases.

**Project Crude** – There were site location meetings with this project held on 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 and SLP still has one possibly two potential sites for this recruitment. Direction on this project is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2015 at the soonest. 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 related to this project and the property for the event Center.

**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 Governor's input on the state budget.

**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 is now a formal contract letter of intent in place with the key partners, which is a big step. 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 this project could announce in the next 15 days. It is possible 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 continues to work through, contracting and due diligence. There should be a definite direction in the early 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2015. 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. This project will rely in part on the use of the increment finance policy. 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 although delayed, we now anticipate some final word in the next 30 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. This project will formally announce as a start up in the next two weeks.

**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. Indications are that the company has been able to work towards an existing multi story site that would well suite their long-term needs. Pending confirmation, this project could be parked by the next months report.

## **Announced Projects**

**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. Recent meetings put together by one of our board members with USDA staff to look at agriculture grant funding and projects for future development is just another one of these examples.

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, such as the Parish GIS Project.

Multiple BERG collaboration meetings have been held over the past fifteen 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

An application we submitted by SLED 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!

It is once again worth noting the recent announcement of the JS Clark Academy Dual Enrollment Program 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 two very solid candidates being considered. The formal date for the current Chancellor to retire is June 15<sup>th</sup> and the target is to have the new Chancellor in place by July 1<sup>st</sup>.

Through GOEIDC proceeds SLED will be supporting an Annual Economic Development scholarship to the LSU-E foundation. We are also continuing to actively support their leadership development program and have had solid discussion this month on moving this forward to a broader scope for next year. Right now, the core of this program is the interaction such as the students that attended April Industrial Board Meeting.

We have agree to participate on the advisory committee for a major United Way Effort called The ALICE Project. It is our hope this comprehensive research effort will help provide some critical answers on key workforce issues due to underlying societal issues that may not always be apparent.

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), which is now in the process of incorporating the Metropolitan Planning Organization, MPO into their existing facility located off of Gloria Switch Road.

We also continue to collectively work on regional priorities through ARA (Acadiana Regional Alliance) which is an additional component of the 1 Acadiana effort to bring a collective voice together to enhance regional economic and community development efforts. Some of the key items of consideration a the board meeting this month have were:

Understanding the efforts on a regional transportation plan

Acadiana Day at the Capitol

Planning a Acadiana Building the Region Conference

Project Front Yard

Ways the Stephenson Disaster Institute can help area businesses

*AEDC (Acadiana Economic Development Council/OA, 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. The board structure of AEDC will still however remain intact for the near term in order to allow a total transformation of the organization.

We have had quality interaction with the senior OA staff this month working through the details of how the OA regional economic development role will be structured in the most efficient manner to compliment parish wide economic development activities.

As a regional economic development entity OA has 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 were:

Making sure transportation is a priority

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

Promoting a 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 steering committee for this group will reconvene next week for final thoughts. The final report is intended to be complete by July 15<sup>th</sup> of this year.

We are continuing to prioritize the work with our Mayor's throughout the parish in order to identify their priorities and how we can provide support on these priorities. Our 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 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 we will continue to offer leadership any assistance possible to move forward in a proactive manner.

The St. Landry Professionals will host its second Membership Meeting the evening of June 17<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 p.m. at Le Vieux Village de Poste des Opelousas. As a recently established non-profit organization we are privileged to host Anita Begnaud, Director, Marketing and Communications and Missy Andrade, Director, Investor Relations to serve as guest speakers on behalf of One Acadiana for this upcoming event. We are striving to ensure SLP Membership meetings sustain the positive momentum of the Acadiana region by providing presentations and information on Parish and regional initiatives. Based off the membership event invite we anticipate large attendance in hopes of increasing our membership numbers.

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 now serves as the Historic Washington Art Gallery providing a venue for local artist to showcase their works. At the most recently held meeting which took place on June 13<sup>th</sup> scholarship

winners were announced from a select group of applicants for the Mid-South Scholarship grant. Amongst other topics discussed included, a Washington Housing initiative to address blighted property throughout the town as well as discussion on the possibility of a developed Community Garden. Efforts continue to progress as Washington is approaching the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its settlement which will be in year 2020. *“Come Home to Washington”* will provide an unparalleled opportunity to bring you, your family, and friends to commemorate the past, celebrate the present, and define the future. With a wide range of events currently in the implementation stages, there will be something to do for all ages.

Downtown Opelousas continues to move forward with infill development. The 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 now complete. There have also been road painting upgrades on these intersections on both Landry and Vine Streets where these traffic signal upgrades were made. 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 through 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.

Our team continues to work with the City of Opelousas through the planning stages necessary to launch a citywide youth soccer program as envisioned within the City of Opelousas Parks and Recreation Master Plan.. The committee chair anticipates the first season to begin in spring of 2016.

We also participated this month in a pilot project work group with the City of Opelousas exploring options on enhancing the quality of life through increased recreation opportunities.

### **Grants Update:**

The \$25,000.00 LBIA Grant for the Business Center have been expensed prior to the June 20, 2015 submission deadline for the grant. All supporting documentation, including project status reports, as well as reimbursement verification invoices will be provided within the close out deadlines. We are optimistic in receiving funding for the 2015-2016 grant funding cycle assuming they are available through LED.

USDA RBEG Grant; by the Delta Regional Authority was approved and funded by USDA Rural Development, National Office, Washington, D.C. This is contingent upon change of ownership of the business center. This is subject to short change on deobligation, but as of late in May 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.

We anticipate using the new Increment Finance Policy over the near term to help potentially move at least three projects forward in communities along the I-49 Corridor. The use of these funds to enhance transportation infrastructure along the corridor will be strong area of near term focus as we look to capitalize on the I-49 potential.

## **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 on the state budget in a broad scope. Our legislators just finished dealing with one of the most challenging state budget scenarios present in recent memory. Many will argue the outcome of this work, but once again it is important for us to be the “Can Do” voice for the Parish so we can 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!!