



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**

The Business Center continues to be a resource for meetings with the ULL SBDC and businesses throughout the parish. It has also been formally used for board meetings of the new Event Center Joint Commission, SLP Moving Forward Leadership meetings, as well as a broad variety of coordination meetings for various parish wide initiatives.

On December 3<sup>rd</sup> Matthew Thibodeaux with the Aaron Agency will conduct a seminar entitled *Facebook for Small Businesses* which will focus on the most effective and best practices to promote your small business through social media. It is our goal that this be the first in a monthly series of collaborative business education efforts that provide real value to existing business. A special thanks to Nicole Wenger and Dionne Greene in taking a lead volunteer role in this coordination.

In addition, SLED's ongoing partnership with ULL SBDC continues to serve as an added value to entrepreneurs throughout our area via monthly one-on-one consulting sessions with those individuals looking to start-up their own business and/or need additional tools and resources to grow/expand. The ULL SBDC has designated the second Tuesday of each month solely for St. Landry Parish to provide services. Their next scheduled workshop is tentatively scheduled to be conducted during the first quarter of 2016 centered on Starting and Financing a Small Business.

Action items completed under the recently awarded FY2016 LED/LBIA Grant for improvements/upgrades to the building include:

- Construction and completion of additional office space from previous break room area.
- Construction and completion of previous break room area entrance way.
- Construction and upgrade completion of back area bathroom regarding ADA compliance.
- Construction and facelift completion to back office entrance area.
- Construction and completion to Board Room back wall area.
- Conversion and completion to storage unit (A) located in warehouse area to a climate controlled storage unit.
- Conversion, construction and completion to office space located in upstairs area of warehouse to be multi-functional serving as additional storage and/or warehouse office with the recent installment of office window.
- Finishing off a partition wall for additional secure storage in the southeast corner of the building.

We have the following tenant activity at the Business Center as of Nov 1<sup>st</sup>:

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)

WIB 40 (December 1<sup>st</sup>)

## **II – Communications**

We continue to explore and work on ways to further enhance the brand image of SLED and SLP by refining our overall progressive image through [www.opportunitystlandry.com](http://www.opportunitystlandry.com) and further on how we can combine this with the positive look and feel of [www.SLPforward.com](http://www.SLPforward.com), as well as with our new GIS Portal upgrades.

To date [www.slpforward.com](http://www.slpforward.com), currently holds a total of twenty-two (22) articles shining the light on positive things happening throughout St. Landry Parish. One (1) article per week is uploaded onto the site on a consistent basis providing fresh and updated article content.

The “*We’re Moving Forward*” St. Landry Parish Branding Campaign since announced continues to gain momentum parish-wide and beyond. In large part due to this campaign and the accessibility of [slpforward.com](http://slpforward.com) SLED was recently approached by an organization called the Focus Media Group about getting national exposure on the collective good things happening in all areas of St Landry Parish, along with the opportunity to highlight some of our core businesses. A significant focus in the article will center on why St. Landry Parish is a great place to live, as well as a great place for business. The article will be appearing in their business publication titled Business in Focus, distributed to over 363,100 subscribers. The content of the article will be developed through interviews from key public and private sector leaders throughout St. Landry Parish.

Jim Bradshaw, content writer, lacking no shortage of article material continues to reach out to our major stakeholders throughout the parish for fresh and new material maintaining stakeholder participation and engagement.

Our continuing efforts for completion of a GIS platform are ongoing and phase 1 of mapping tool can now be found on the home page of [www.opportunitystlandry.com](http://www.opportunitystlandry.com). We are currently working diligently with multiple stakeholder entities throughout the parish to ensure we incorporate and highlight our area’s greatest assets and what tools

and information are most beneficial to our constituents as well as site selectors, tourist, companies etc. Some of the enhanced GIS layers being built now include:

- The top employers in the parish by sector
- An updated overlay on the Parish Road Home Program
- Training institutions in the parish
- Core cultural resources in the parish
- An up to date commercial property listings

These features represent upgrades to the system beyond the core base layers typically included in standard GIS offerings.

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

Significant work continues using taxing districts as a means to help communities upgrade infrastructure capacity along the major I-49 exits. The communities of Grand Coteau, Port Barre, Washington, and Opelousas have all been in of part of these discussions on how these kinds of tools can be used to generate funds for infrastructure. We continue to work active development project at four of the major interchanges on the I-49 corridor. Each of these developments incorporates a large development creating numerous new business opportunities.

Site development efforts with the newly formed team of 1 Acadiana continue to get added priority emphasis. We are optimistic that this additional 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. The larger focus under either condition is to develop industrial sites in the parish to a “shovel ready” status with the support of the LED Site Development Program. This fits one of the key economic development priorities for One Acadiana, which is actively pursuing industrial development opportunities.

### **IV Projects Update Summary: 17 Active, 3 New (Glare, HIPPO, Vertical) 4 Pending Announcement, (Slip, Outpost A, Lid, Lot) 10 Announced, 1 Pending Park, (Mat)**

**Project Amber** – This project continues to be in the discussions with 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 ongoing planning process. Recently, it has come to light that this project also come into consideration of a corporate merger with one of their main customers, which should be clear by February. We will keep the project on the active list in the interim. If successful this project could create up to 10 full time positions.

**Project Clean** – This is a manufacturing infill development project located in the center of the parish. There continues to be a lot of optimism with their leadership on this being successful, but the project hinges on some new contracts being negotiated in this geography that are needed to confirm viability. If successful this project could create 25 new direct 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 challenge with this project continues to be site location along the I-49 Corridor. We are continuing to facilitate discussions and plans with developers along the corridor on suitable sites for this effort. If successful the project could create up to 20 additional full time positions.

**Project End Termination** – This was a general RFP by LED that was submitted by our team through the team at One Acadiana. We anticipate the short list for this project being announced sometime later this month. This project is in the initial stages that if successful would create 20-30 net new direct jobs.

**Project Expo** – An update on some of the high level activities associated 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. Progress has been very slow, but we are still optimistic that changes in municipal leadership in the middle of the parish may help to give this project some additional momentum, particularly in downtown related properties.

**Project Fountain** – This is a large scale commercial development project that discussions have been ongoing for some time National tenants are committed to this project and negotiations with landowners and real estate development partner are continuing on a regular basis. This is still a large project that would be developed over time in phases.

**Project Glare** – This is a light industrial manufacturer with locations in other states that is looking to add an additional facility here in the Parish. We are working with them at this time on identifying suitable site locations/costs. We anticipate this process continuing over the next 30 to 60 days on finding a good location. Initial job creation figures are up to 35 direct full time positions being created.

**Project HIPPO** – This is a heavy industrial project that is in its early stages, but that continues to make good progress. The project is very large in scope on its investment and job creation potential. Currently, we are working with regional and state partners on identifying and meeting engineering requirements on the footprint site. We hope to have the initial site work requirement completed by the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2016, which is happening in unison with industrial layout discussions. There are not accurate job projection figures available on this project

**Project Lid** – This project is a manufacturer planning to locate along one of our key transportation corridors. The company closed on their purchase agreement on property and is working through site layout and building architectural on the production facility now. Although the project has been delayed overall by about 60 to 90 days beyond their initial projections they still anticipate a formal announcement and groundbreaking in the

1<sup>st</sup> Quarter of 2016. This project will relocate up to 100 immediate jobs and has potential to add 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 this site has been closed on and although there has been some delays, we now anticipate a groundbreaking on this project in January. 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. Pending no updates we will put this project into a parked status next month. 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 and now additional challenges with land acquisition. We hope to have some resolution on the land contract with this project one way, or another in the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter. If successful, this project could create up to 100 direct full time positions.

**Project Outpost (A)** - The national tenant is in under contract and in the due diligence stage on one site located on Hwy 190. The building plan for this project is in the final stages of approval by the State Fire Marshall. We are in coordination with the company's national corporate office now coordinating an official ground breaking ceremony. This project will create at least 25 - 30 direct full time positions.

**Project Slip** – This project deals with a major effort with a regional employer who is looking to upgrade their footprint in St Landry Parish. This major upgrade is now underway with the potential to bring up to 2000 temporary construction jobs to the parish over the next 45 days and allow for up to an additional 15 permanent jobs to be created due to the expansion. We are coordinating with company officials on releasing a public announcement.

**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 is still scheduled to formally announce soon, but is also being hit hard by the downturn in oil and gas.

**Project Vertical** – This project is dealing with a light industrial manufacturer looking to put a new production facility in the Parish. We are currently working on site locations offering suitable heavy transportation access. If successful this project would create up to 30 direct full time positions.

## **Announced Projects**

**Project Bayou** – This Wal-Mart Neighbor Center projected was announced earlier this month as being an example of highlighting the retail development potential here in the center of the Parish. This project is well into its construction process now and is projecting a formal opening on January 20<sup>th</sup>. This project will create between 90 and 100 direct full time positions. The company had a temporary hiring office set up in the old Daily World Office on Heather Dr. Acadiana Works is providing direct assistance to this company in recruiting and screening potential employment candidates.

**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 Lynx** – This project, The Hazelwood Energy Project, was formally announced on Sept 30<sup>th</sup>. This project is projected to create 123 direct full time positions, 135 indirect positions and 200 temporary construction related positions. This project also has the potential to lay the framework for significant future development.

**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:**

Collaboration efforts with the St. Landry Chamber of Commerce board are moving forward at multiple levels. We will be continuing to work collectively this month on the capital outlay request for the 2016 Legislative Session, as well as other community development related initiatives.

Our work with SLP Tourism also continues to move forward. We 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. We are also working with them now on supporting lodging requirements for a very large construction project. (Project Slip)

Seventeen BERG collaboration meetings have been held over the past eight months with the following SLP 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
- Sterling Automotive Group
- Giles Automotive Group
- Opelousas General Health Systems (OGH)
- Waveland Services

We are awaiting the final deliverables from efforts as part of the advisory committee for a major United Way Effort economic analysis project 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 and perhaps open the door to being able to provide more detailed economic grant related data.

We are continuing efforts with Cornerstone Governmental Affairs, SLED, SLP Government, SLP Tourism, SLP CHOC, and SLP Solid Waste on funding priorities for the 2016 Capital Outlay Session. These requests are now in for the 2016 session. This will be summarized as part of the executive overview.

We are moving forward with active participation in multiple areas with the newly formed Acadiana Planning Commission, APC and its newly incorporated Metropolitan Planning Organization. This is already paying big dividends in the planning staff capacity within APC and their support of SLP. The most recent example is with the MPO currently getting updated traffic counts for us on key transportation areas in the Parish.

We are continuing our active efforts with a board seat on the 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 at the last board meeting were dealing with the recent regional leadership orientation done in Vermillion, St Mary and Iberia Parishes, as well as early planning for an Acadiana Day at the State Capitol.

#### *AEDC (Acadiana Economic Development Council)*

We are nearing the deadline for an exciting regional business accelerator program that would be cooperative initiative with InnoV8 Acadiana, seven parish economic development organizations, and Winrock International. This is in part funded through an EDA matching grant in order to get full funding. We are coming to the deadline for this project later this month.

We continue quality interaction on multiple levels with the staff at OA as we look to enhance the economic development capacity for region. As a reminder, their economic development priorities for 2016 are:

- Maintaining strong executive leadership and financial support for LED.
- Proactively pursuing industry development for Acadiana.
- Restoring, protecting, and reforming key economic development incentive programs.
- Supporting game changing opportunities.

We spent significant time with staff from OA this month in reviewing the best practice takeaways from our recent leadership conference in Charleston. We have also been actively engaged in a comprehensive regional economic development analysis that is being done by Jay Garner and Associates.

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

Ardyn Co has completed a business plan that focuses on the Cultural Economy of Arnaudville with an emphasis on the alternative usage of St Luke’s Hospital, which has now been publicly announced in the A-Biz magazine. We are now facilitating efforts between Parish Presidents on legal options for valuation and transfer of ownership with the facility, as well as providing technical assistance in the structure of a 501c3 dealing with the cultural economy in that area that could potentially operate such a facility under the right structure.

We continue to provide attendance and support to the Steamboat City Association in Washington to work on various community development initiatives. The association continues to pursue its housing initiative through Rebuild America- St. Landry Chapter with a general emphasis on identifying housing needs for those low-income individuals and families throughout the area over the course of the next year. Additionally, the association is revisiting the idea of engaging community gardens.

The Historic Washington Art Gallery will conduct an open house on December 5<sup>th</sup> which will be open to public with wine and cheese to be provided. Times have yet to be determined.

Opelousas continues to vet options on downtown curb and sidewalk enhancement work made available through a Louisiana Transportation Alternative Program grant. It also includes 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.

We had the initial pilot program meeting this month in Opelousas with LED and State Main Street that is designed to help downtown businesses succeed. Opelousas is one of only 4 communities in the state selected to participate in this program.

We are working with Opelousas leadership now to explore options for them to consider using the resources of the APC to help identify and prioritize some of the key priorities that will make significant positive impacts in the City.

We have spent extensive time with the new Chancellor for LSU-E, Dr. Kimberly Russell, who will officially assumed her new role effective September 1<sup>st</sup>. Dr. Russell, as well as student from their leadership program will be active in our meeting today. Most recently, Dr. Russell engaged her Advisory Board in a focus group session as part of their strategic prioritization process.

We continue to work with the leadership of Port Barre in their efforts to formally move forward as one of only five communities in Acadiana that will participating in a pilot planning program offered through the Acadiana Planning Commission, APC.

We also continue to work with the leadership in Eunice on moving forward with updating a comprehensive plan and a follow up action plan to move strategic priorities forward. We meet with the members of their planning committee last week and will be meeting with them again on December 3<sup>rd</sup> to help them explore available tools and options.

On November 16<sup>th</sup> we met with leaders in Grand Coteau in a public workshop on utilizing resources from the APC to help prioritize improvements in their newly established taxing district. This process will ultimately allow businesses in the district a voice in what infrastructure improvements are done and in what order they get listed.

We have been actively engaged in multiple ways with the discussion of the I-49 South Coalition. The project is moving forward in many ways with the extension through Lafayette being the biggest hurdle in the project. The Lafayette portion is looking at 3.5 miles being elevated and 2 miles built at grade. The extension is project at 6 to 8 lanes and will have 20 total ramps. It will require modifications to the airport runway and will involve between 150 to 200 existing properties in its projected path.

We are not giving up on discussions with the Wal-Mart DC executive team with community leaders from Washington on the potential for using the Wal-Mart Mentor Program for the small communities in the proximity of the DC.

The St. Landry Professionals will forgo its monthly November Membership Meeting. In its place the SLP will be hosting a Political Voice Forum. SLP has been working diligently to raise political awareness throughout St. Landry Parish, educate constituents on candidate's platforms and increase voter registration and participation. The Political Voice Forum will allow the opportunity for all recently elected officials as well as current run-off candidates to meet in a casual and collective atmosphere providing a unique opportunity to outline platforms and engage the public. This signature event is an integral part of SLPs mission to facilitate civic empowerment and political engagement. The community information event will take place on November 18, 2015 at 5:30 p.m. at The Opelousas Civic Center (2235 Creswell Lane, Opelousas, La 70570).

On October 29<sup>th</sup> SLP served as a sponsor for the Opelousas City of Tourism's Annual Halloween event in an effort to further promote our organization as well as assist in Girl Scout recruitment. From that event over forty girls were registered. A meeting will be held in mid-December for parent follow-up and troop assignment. Prior to SLP's involvement there were roughly three (3) active troops in the area, since SLP has doubled their capacity to six (6) with the hopes of forming roughly four (4) more troops based off the aforementioned event's success.

### **Grants Update:**

FY2016 LBIA \$25,000 Grant building improvements have begun as of September 15, 2015. To date a total of six of nine items have been completed.

The signage to be provided under the USDA RBEG Grant for the digital marquee has been ordered and is expected to arrive by month's end with complete installation of signage to be complete by the second week of December 2015.

We anticipate using the new Increment Finance Policy over the near term in multiple locations to help communities along the I-49 Corridor. The use of these funds will be 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. Grand Coteau finalized their process for the creation of the Parish's 2<sup>nd</sup> economic development taxing district at their general council meeting held on November 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## **VII – Training Opportunities**

Basic Economic Development Course; January 26 – 29, New Orleans

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

## **VIII – Conclusion**

There are current economic factors that continue to cause concern for the Acadiana Economy in the minds of many people. Know that we will have a new Governor, knowing that we have big state budget concerns, and of course the current status of the oil field are all question marks for the future. It is in the time of uncertainties that people look for sound leadership, which is truly something the members of this board have provided. We are that "Can Do" voice on moving things forward. As our new branding campaign shows, there is lot to be proud of in SLP and a lot more coming that we can all be proud of. I want you all to know how much I appreciate your support in being such an integral part of making good things happen for other people. With your support we

are continuing to grow the capacity of our organization, as well the prosperity of our parish. With your continued support we will continue to expand opportunities, growth, and positive impact across St Landry Parish throughout the last quarter of this year and beyond!!