

Livingston Economic Development Council

Annual Report on Economic Development

January 22, 2009

LEDC is an economic development organization working to improve the quality of life for citizens of Livingston Parish

Highlights of 2008

- Bass Pro Shops opened in February 2008
- Bercen Inc. relocates corporate headquarters
- Stine Lumber Home Improvement
- Compressor Engineering opens new facility
- Miscellaneous Steel Specialties relocates and re-opens
- Livingston Tomorrow five-year economic growth plan
- Parish Economic Indicators
- Residential Growth
- Healthcare Sector
- Dixie Business Center honored
- Remembering Bob Easterly

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Top Economic Development Stories of 2008

Livingston Parish had another top economic development year as it continued to see new growth in numerous business sectors that will contribute to the diversification of the economy even further.

"We have been fortunate once again to attract a diverse set of businesses that find Livingston Parish the place to operate," said John Ware, LEDC Executive Director.

New recruits to the parish included Bercen Inc.'s headquarters office and R & D labs, which moved from Rhode Island to Denham Springs where it has a customer service department and manufacturing site.

The Louisiana grown Sulphur-based Stine Home Improvement, the largest retailer since Bass Pro Shop, offers a unique home improvement concept in Walker to serve the ever-growing market along Interstates 12 and 10.

The *Livingston Tomorrow* campaign made great strides in its plan for fostering long-term growth including initiatives that assisted in

the 2008 growth in Livingston Parish.



Bass Pro Shop

The much anticipated grand opening of the Bass Pro Shop in Denham Springs occurred on February 6 to an overwhelming crowd of approximately 7,000 that arrived early to secure a place in line. Four days later, at the end of the store's first weekend in operation, 65,000 visitors were counted with sales surpassing its peers across the nation during the weekend.

Even in a down economy the Denham Springs

store has been one of the Springfield, Missouri company's better locations in the U.S. and it has led to further development as the Denham Springs Economic Development District it anchors has seen the opening of two popular restaurants and a new strip shopping center.

Denham Springs Mayor Jimmy Durbin said that this was one of the most exciting days during his tenure as mayor. "I'm just so appreciative of all who have committed so much valuable time to see this day happen," he said.

The long-term plan for development of the site includes additional retail and entertainment venues that will add value to the Bass Pro destination experience.





Bercen Moves Headquarters To Livingston Parish

Livingston Parish officials along with Governor Bobby Jindal and Louisiana Economic Development (LED) Secretary Stephen Moret announced in June that Bercen, Inc. was moving its headquarters, as well as its research and development and technical service laboratories, from Cranston, Rhode Island to Denham Springs.

Along with relocating its headquarters and laboratories, Bercen will expand its local manufacturing operation for a total capital investment of \$5 million along with adding 20 new jobs with average annual salaries of \$90,000 plus benefits.

Bercen has provided products, services and innovation to the paper industry for more than 40 years. Its products are sold worldwide and facilities include a customer service department and manufacturing site in Denham Springs.

"The decision to move our sole base of manufacturing operations from Cranston to Denham Springs was based on what we found to be a more competitive business climate in Louisiana," said Jim Thorpe, president and CEO of Bercen, Inc. "We are enthusiastic about the direction in which Louisiana is heading, and we want to be a part of it."



Stine Home Improvement

Sulphur, Louisiana-based Stine Lumber Company expanded its Louisiana operations in December with a new retail center in Walker. The home improvement center will serve customers in the greater Baton Rouge area along Interstates 12 and 10 from the new 120,000 square foot center.

The center includes a lumber yard, garden center, and a home design center with every imaginable product used in the home with a unique drive-thru concept for picking up large items.

The center, the company's 12th in Louisiana, is a 7 day/week operation employing 80 associates. The investment in building and inventory exceeded \$15 million. The company utilized the accelerated depreciation component of the federal GO Zone bond program. The city of Walker invested \$200,000 in sewer and road access that will also benefit others locating near the site.

"We are excited to be growing into Livingston Parish, a fast growing community where we anticipate serving the large market along Interstates 12 and 10," said company president, Dennis Stine.



Compressor Engineering

After announcing early last year that it would locate an industrial compressor fabrication, refurbishing and repair operation in the Livingston Industrial Park, Compressor Engineering Corporation officially moved into its newly constructed building in mid-December.

The facility includes a 45,000 square foot precision repair operation as well as a 4,500 square foot

regional sales and parts office employing a total of 14 persons. The new Walker facility is positioned to serve in a greater capacity and with quicker response to support its Eastern Louisiana and Western Mississippi pipeline customers.

The company anticipates expanding the presence of CECO Pipeline Services operation into the facility in about a year.

Miscellaneous Steel Specialties

Miscellaneous Steel Specialties, a fabricator of structural steel parts for the petrochemical industry, relocated its Walker-based production facility to the Livingston Industrial Park to accommodate the Our Lady of the Lake expansion into Livingston Parish.

According to its president, Mitch Badeaux, the company wanted to stay in the parish because of the employees it found in Walker. "The employee pool is the main reason we stayed in Livingston Parish," said Badeaux.

The company constructed a new 12,000 square foot building and added six employees, which is the result of an anticipated 30 percent increase in production output. Badeaux reported the new facility has improved production and material handling efficiencies.

Miscellaneous Steel Specialties, operating in the parish since October 2006, invested approximately \$1 million in its new facility & equipment and will employ 21 persons when it starts production early in 2009. It is working with LEDC to receive tax incentives for its re-location.





**Parish President
Mike Grimmer**

We are looking forward in 2009 to making history in Livingston Parish. As of November, Bass Pro was 35% ahead of projected sales and as of January 1, 2009 it was #1 in the company for boat sales, the fishing department, and the fudge shop. It will soon be announced as the "New Store of the Year" at the upcoming Bass Pro Shops corporate meeting.

North Oaks Hospital will build a 47,000 square foot medical complex this spring at the I-12 Satsuma exit. Our Lady of the Lake will finally be back on a lake when it develops its 240-acre Our Lady of the Lake Healthcare Services in Walker.

Wal-Mart purchased two more sites to add to its three operating stores in the parish. Juban Crossing is still on the front burner, even with the downturn of the economy and the delays in permit approvals by the Corps of Engineers. We continue to work diligently to move this project forward.

Our North Park recreational facility will be second to none with a \$9 million expansion as construction begins early this year.

Sales tax collection parish wide held its own, finishing the year with a 5.31% increase over 2007.

The state's \$100 million Interstate 12 resurfacing and expansion to 3 lanes will move its way into Livingston Parish at Denham Springs. In the years to come, not only for Livingston Parish but for the entire region, infrastructure and traffic will be at

the front of the line.

Lastly, the U.S. Coast Guard will lead a project to clean nine major waterways in Livingston Parish. This will include removing trees, stumps, old house boats and obstructions within our waterways.

I would like to thank the Livingston Parish Chamber of Commerce, LEDC, the Board of Realtors, and all citizens for moving Livingston Parish forward. May God bless all of us as we look for the new businesses that we will find in 2009.



Livingston Tomorrow

The 5-year strategic plan developed by the public and private sector in November 2007 has made strides towards continued economic growth of the parish.

- ◆ Securing a \$100,000 State Tier II grant through Louisiana Economic Development;
- ◆ Partnering with the Baton Rouge Area Chamber on several projects (*Welcome Home to Baton Rouge* campaign, Capitol Area Region Leadership Institute, business retention efforts, workforce development, new business prospects);
- ◆ Seeking State approval as a Certified Retirement Community and developing a marketing plan to suit;
- ◆ LEDC website currently under construction, with a Workforce site and Retirement site coming soon;
- ◆ Fostering ongoing legislative and local government support and involvement;
- ◆ Creating a workforce development and education plan that will set Livingston Parish at the forefront in this area by connecting all workforce sectors (public

schools, universities and technical colleges, private business, chambers, human resource professionals, and government agencies) to achieve recognition as a model of best practices for others to follow;

- ◆ Acquiring the latest technology and software to assist with Business Retention and Site Selection
- ◆ Participating in the I-12 Alliance to foster regional growth; and
- ◆ Conducting research on targeted industries, helping to identify the types of businesses we want, need and can sustain, as well as what types of businesses can capitalize on the strengths of Livingston Parish.

Parish Economic Growth Indicators

The parish continues to be at the forefront of growth in the Baton Rouge region. Its growth rate ranked 1st out of the 11 parishes in terms of non-residential permits, employment, business units and residential building permits growth; and 3rd for quarterly wages paid growth.

Economic Indicator	1st Quarter 2007-2008 % Growth
Employment in Parish	+8.87%
No. of New Businesses	+6.22%
Quarterly Wages Paid	+15.33%
Sales Tax Collections	+5.31%
Non-residential Building Permits	+38.89%
Residential Building Permits	-17.45%

Residential Development Continues

Residential development continues at a strong pace with the expansions occurring at Greystone Golf Community and Carter Plantation.

Greystone is constructing a 25-foot, 6-lane racing style pool and 6 new tennis courts, both to be serviced by a luxurious pavilion and poolside grill and restaurant. As Greystone becomes a true country club it can accommodate high-end functions such as weddings and corporate events.

With the opening of a 10,000 square foot conference center in December, Carter Plantation completed its latest expansion project, all of which serve to enhance the quality of life for the development's residents and others surrounding the Springfield community.

The facility includes a ballroom, breakout room, an executive boardroom, and a unique eatery that provides the opportunity for diners to interact with the executive chef.

Healthcare Sector Growth

The residential and commercial growth in the parish is being followed by significant growth in the healthcare sector, which will allow residents to travel shorter distances for high quality care.

North Oaks Health System, serving the parish since 1960, plans to expand its presence with a new facility focused on convenient and efficient outpatient healthcare. The \$32 million 2-story, 47,000-square-foot medical complex on a 30-acre site in the Suma Crossing neighborhood development in Satsuma near Interstate-12, is anticipated to be completed in the second quarter of 2010. It is anticipated that the 18-month construction phase will create 70 new jobs with an average wage of \$18.50 per hour.

Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center (LOL) continues site preparation on its 240 acre site in Walker. The next step in development of the property will require approval from the Army Corps of Engineers so that the land is developed according to the Corps' directive for wetlands. The timeline from approval until construction completion will be Fall 2009 until Spring 2011.

Currently crews are working to create an access road leading in to the property and erecting a sign identifying the property as a future site for Our Lady of the Lake Healthcare Services.

Dixie Business Center

The Dixie Business Center turned 15 years old in 2008 and has grown from about 8,000 square feet in 1996 to nearly 50,000 square feet today.

It was recognized in 2008 for 15 years of membership in the National Business Incubation Association.



LEDC President Jeff Woods

The 2009 annual meeting closes out my term as president of the LEDC. Six years or so ago, I was challenged by Mike Boudreaux, at the time the General Manager of Shaw Sunland Fabricators, to enroll in the 12-week leadership seminar sponsored by the LEDC. Strengths and weaknesses of our parish were brought to light by our speakers, and each week we were shown as a group working together how problems and issues could be solved. After the course was completed, I asked John Ware what I could do to help and he soon found many things for me to do.

Our LEDC meetings were often times long, in secret and more times than not, at least one good argument broke out. We all shared one hope and one dream of a better Livingston Parish.

Having the privilege to work with leaders such as John Ware, Bob Easterly, Ken Holland, Ferdie Genre, Mike Grimmer, Mary Broussard, and Cindy Wale is what I consider a blessing. I would like to thank each of you for life lessons that you have taught me.

Remembering Bob Easterly



Our dear friend and LEDC board member, Bob Easterly, passed away in October from cancer. Bob had been a prominent banker in Louisiana for 34 years and was a founding member of LEDC. He was well respected by colleagues including those associated with LEDC.

During his 26-year tenure as a board member, Bob eagerly contributed his passion and ideas for growing the Livingston Parish community to what it is today and what it will be in the future. He dearly loved Livingston Parish and worked hard to see it grow and its citizens prosper from new economic development.

We appreciate all he did for this community and organization.