



Experience the Ascension Advantage



OUR 2006 ANNUAL REPORT

HISTORY

AEDC was formed in 2005 by the economic development committee of the Ascension Chamber of Commerce. The seven-member AEDC Board is appointed by the Ascension Chamber, the Parish Council, and Parish President. Two members of the Ascension Parish Council serve ex-officio.

FUNDING

The Parish of Ascension has committed \$341,000 annually to fund AEDC for 2006-2008. The City of Gonzales has also committed \$25,000 annually for 2006-2008. Entergy Corporation in March 2006 donated \$5,000 to fund part of the new AEDC website.

A 501^c3 foundation (the Ascension Economic Development Foundation-AEDF) was created in May of 2006 by AEDC to raise additional funds from the private sector and private foundations. More than \$150,000 has been committed over the next five years for the foundation, with \$50,000 collected to date. A goal to raise over \$400,000 in private contributions has been determined.

Donations to the AEDF will be used to fund key economic development projects.

OPERATIONAL

A President/CEO was hired in January 2006 and two additional staff were hired in April of 2006. AEDC located its offices to the second floor of the Ascension Tourist Commission offices in Sorrento in March. Some of AEDC's initiatives include:

- Developed a local business retention calling program and use of the Synchronist[®] software database to measure business climate in the Parish
- Created AEDC website and brochures marketing the Parish nationally to site selection consultants and companies considering the Parish
- Developed a building and site database on available property on AEDC website
- Designed GIS maps of major available industrial sites and available land within chemical plants along the Mississippi River
- Creating on-going photo database of potential movie locations in the Parish

- Developed an animated video to attract the film industry to shoot movies in Ascension Parish
- Coordinated assistance from Greater Baton Rouge Port Commission and other organizations for the Donaldsonville Riverfront Project.
- Signed a Sister City Agreement between the Jinshan District of Shanghai, China and Ascension Parish for trade and cultural opportunities associated with the Synfuel project.
- AEDC staff attended national industry and site selection conferences including Corenet Global, National Petroleum Refinery Association, Association of Film Commissioners International, American Film Market, and Louisiana Restaurant Association to market Ascension Parish for business development.

PROJECTS

Attraction:

- **84 Lumber Distribution Facility - 10 jobs, \$4 million**—AEDC worked with local realtors in identifying the former closed Plastishell Building in Gonzales and sign variance issues.
- **Synfuel, Inc. - 900 jobs, \$5 billion**—AEDC is working with Louisiana Dept of Economic Development officials on workforce training, local permitting needs, and business exchange opportunities with Chinese officials.
- AEDC lobbied the Baton Rouge Area Chamber in partnership with the Ascension Chamber to publicly endorse the **Cabela's** project, whose case was finally decided by the Louisiana State Supreme Court in September 2006. Construction will begin in late 2006 and final completion in Fall 2007.

Retention and Expansion:

- **Houmas House Resort - 150 new jobs, \$13 million**
AEDC worked with Houmas House officials on variance and incentive issues

Film Projects

- Secured "Dreamboy" independent film for filming select scenes in the Donaldsonville area

*Pending Prospects**

- Two Ethanol Plants
- Two Liquid Bulk Storage and Blending Facilities
- Biomass Plant
- Food Processing Plant
- National Retailer
- "The Story of Bonnie & Clyde" Film—\$20 million project
- "Waltz of the Tear Drop Diamond" Film—\$10 million project

*As of December 2006



THE ASCENSION ADVANTAGE PLAN

With more than 100,000 Parish residents estimated “post-Katrina,” commercial and residential growth increasing, a lack of infrastructure, and a stable but potential downsizing of its industrial base, Ascension Parish needs a diversified economy to sustain its growth in order to provide jobs for its citizens and a consistent tax base for governmental operations.

A bold, new five-year plan for economic development named “The Ascension Advantage Plan” has been proposed to grow the existing business base and diversify the economy. Private funds raised through the AEDF will fund these initiatives with AEDC providing staff support.

TARGETED INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Louisiana Edible Creations Center

Developed as Louisiana’s first business incubator for the food industry to promote the State’s unique cuisine, the Louisiana Edible Creations Center (LECC) at the Lamar Dixon Expo Center allows entrepreneurs in the food industry the use of a professional kitchen at reduced rental rates. LECC also provides assistance to entrepreneurs considering starting a food business including making connections with food industry leaders and small business development experts.

More than six tenants have used the facility since its creation in May of 2006, and AEDC is in the process of acquiring new packaging equipment for long-term contracts with tenants*. AEDC has secured over \$25,000 in grants for start-up costs and purchasing equipment with other grants pending for additional food equipment from State matching funds.

Ascension Megasite Project

AEDC has started the process of developing a “shovel-ready” or “certified” megasite within Ascension Parish for “mega” projects considering the Parish.

AEDC will assess large available sites within the Parish on the east and west banks of the Mississippi River, including review of the site for infrastructure, zoning, non-attainment issues, and dock construction along the Mississippi River, including geophysical and topographic assessments.

A final report will be issued in early 2007 and further work will be done on the final site or sites recommended followed by an environmental engineering study of the property and securing an option/right of first refusal.* If infrastructure is needed on the site, AEDC in coordination with the Parish and local utility companies will work over the next few years to bring needed infrastructure to the site.

When completed, Ascension Parish will have the only shovel-ready site in the Baton Rouge region and along the Mississippi River, giving the Parish an advantage over neighboring parishes for large manufacturing projects in the future.

*Pending funding and AEDC board approval

FUTURE INITIATIVES*

Downstream Industry Program

Although current chemical plant operations in Ascension are stable, the chemical industry is consolidating nationally. AEDC will continue to work with local plant officials on retaining existing operations through both modernization of older plant operations and assisting with training programs such as PTECH to assist in replacing an aging workforce.

In the past, business development in the chemical sector has focused on bringing large chemical plants into Louisiana and on upgrading bulk chemicals produced here but shipped elsewhere for further processing. Creating new markets for commodity based chemicals, especially with high priced specialty and fine chemicals, offers business development opportunities for local plants and new investment and jobs to Ascension Parish through marketing underutilized streams. AEDC has already identified more than a dozen parcels of land at local plants that have been provided by local plant managers for co-location opportunities.

AEDF will contract with Baton Rouge-based SSA Consultants to target between 3-6 local plants (3 per phase) in Ascension for downstream specialty chemical operations. After discovering excess streams, SSA will work with AEDC staff to target domestic and international specialty chemical companies, which may have interest in co-locating or purchasing underutilized streams from plants, thereby expanding markets and retaining existing operations in Ascension.

Business Attraction Program

In addition to marketing the Parish through the AEDC website, AEDC will develop industry-specific marketing materials for Ascension Parish. Funding for this program will also pay for AEDC staff to attend targeted industry conferences and trade shows with the Baton Rouge Area Chamber and Louisiana Department of Economic Development officials.

AEDC will also begin the process of identifying available commercial and industrial land within Ascension and meet with local and national business park developers to create more office and industrial parks in the Parish, a deficiency that is causing Ascension to lose projects to neighboring parishes and regions.

With more population moving into the Parish, opportunities for new start-up businesses will grow, and AEDC will explore the opportunity for a business incubator, possibly within new proposed business parks. The incubator would serve as a feeder for new tenants for business parks in the future.

Film Marketing Program

Since the passage of the film tax credits in Louisiana in 2002, Louisiana is constantly ranked in the top five states in the U.S. for film locations. The Baton Rouge region, and especially Ascension Parish, provide different backdrops for many films and can serve as suburban, rural, industrial, small town, and Old South scenes for movies.

AEDC developed a marketing CD for the film industry in March of 2006 to promote Ascension Parish and has replied to over a dozen requests in 2006 for location information from the LA Film Office, Lacaeda, and from movie scouts. AEDC is working on two films considering shooting in Ascension. AEDC will develop a database of locations around the Parish with upgraded camera and photo equipment, a software database, marketing materials, and annual upgrades to the AEDC marketing CD. AEDC will also explore the development of training programs for the film industry at the local community and technical colleges and the feasibility of a film studio for Ascension Parish.

*Pending funding and AEDC board approval

OUR RESULTS (as of December 2006)

RETENTION

Visits to Local Companies	27
Possible Jobs	230
Potential Capital Investment.....	\$150,000,000

ATTRACTION

Prospect Visits	24
Potential Jobs	1,978
Potential Capital Investment.....	\$6.28 billion*










*includes \$5 billion announced Synfuel project with 900 jobs and \$1.2 billion Ethanol plant with 400 jobs

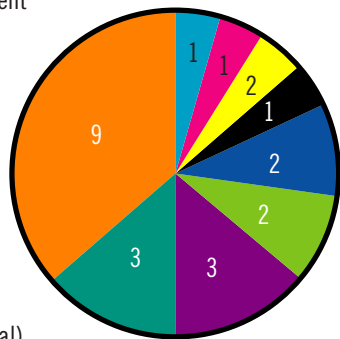
MOVIE LOCATIONS

Scout Visits	15
Potential Films	2
Potential Capital Investment.....	\$30 million

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS RESPONDED (RFPs) - 24

Industries Represented in RFPs sent

	1 Regional HQs
	1 Film Studio
	2 Logistics-Chemical
	1 R&D Facility
	2 Call Centers
	2 Other
	3 Chemical Manufacturing
	3 Distribution Centers
	9 Manufacturing (non-chemical)



Business Retention Calling Program Survey Results*:

- 83% have emerging/growing product life cycle
- 60% have been in business for 25-50 years
- 71% expect new products in next two years
- 55% have room to expand
- 73% say company sales increasing
- 69% expect to expand in next three years
- 70% said facility is adequate for expansion
- 75% have positive local opinion of Parish shared by corporate Hqs
- 47% having trouble filling skilled positions
- 56% attribute lack of skilled workers to industry norms
- 70% have stable workforce
- Concerns with residential intrusion on chemical facilities
- Stable workforce, concern for filling retiring workforce
- Highest rankings for community services-police, schools
- Lowest rankings for community services-zoning, roads

*=sample size of 27 companies; results from Synchronist® Database



AEDC Board Members

Chairman, John D. Scanlan

Executive President
EATEL

Vice Chairman, Don Ramsey

Ramsey Enterprises

Secretary/Treasurer, Buddy Broussard

Gil Broussard Construction

Chuck LeBlanc

Bourg Insurance Agency, Inc.

Dwight Poirrier

Attorney At Law

Theresa Robert

Owner, Cabin Restaurant

Leonard Wyatt

Amsouth Bank

Ex Officio Member:

Councilman Kent Schexnaydre

Ex Officio Member:

Councilman Jared Beiriger

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