



NWLA REGIONAL WRAP

FEBRUARY 2009

Regional Wrap is a periodic electronic brief for investors of the Northwest Louisiana Economic Development Foundation (NLEDF) and other interested parties.

It's been a few weeks since the last Wrap went out. Lots of news – significant and insignificant, relevant and irrelevant -- has swept over us in the meantime. I've thought frequently about what that does to each of us. Does it make us act differently than our situation really suggests? Does it make us feel symptoms that we really don't have?

Certainly, there is cause for some caution and watchfulness, but I remain convinced that NW Louisiana will fare better than many regions of the country. Yes we will and have taken some lumps in the last few weeks and months. Unemployment is up measurably (though still meaningfully below national averages) and we all are concerned about our friends, neighbors and relatives who work at places such as General Motors. We are certainly are seeing "transitions" across our communities, state and nation. But that may also offer us a peek at the next chapter for us and our region.

Six or 12 months ago, many were talking about opportunities ahead. Is that no longer the case? I think that our region -- many of our businesses, communities and even us individually -- still should be looking ahead for opportunities. Perhaps this is a good time to reassess, reposition, reinvigorate and renew ourselves and our vision. What do we want to become and what can we do about it?

For our region, I believe early 2009 is a good time to take stock in where we are and what we need to do now or in the coming months to ensure that our future remains bright.

Residents and elected leaders can review their stance on how they support business in their communities. Are the various processes simple, understandable and customer focused? Is this a time to think ahead about what needs to be in place when the economy is hot again? Perhaps that means looking into establishing a "progress or deal closing fund" to help make projects happen in a community. Perhaps it means identifying the location for the next industrial development area or industrial park. The current times can allow us to step up and do things differently and work to ensure that we are in control and not being controlled.

Companies can go through the same evaluation and reinvention scenarios at their offices or locations. What will success look like in 2010, 2015, etc.? Are there opportunities to prepare for what's next? Does that involve training or cross-training? Doing homework on new markets, new customers or new offerings?

The State is in the midst of just this type of effort too. The Louisiana Workforce Commission is developing its new capabilities/structure and revamping itself into a stronger partner for business. Louisiana Economic Development is enhancing its capabilities to better engage both current/emerging sectors and our state's existing businesses.

Given the competitive landscape that NW Louisiana faced before the recession when competing for jobs and capital investment, this is an ideal time for us all to resupply and revitalize our commitment to being ready again for the next round. At this point, the NLEDF is optimistic that 2009 holds positive

news “just around the corner.” Stay tuned and get ready. This may only a brief pause in our rise as vibrant and emerging economic region. Thanks for your many efforts and support.

GOOD NEWS IN THE MIDST OF THE NOISE

Did you see the story that overall crime in Shreveport is at a 31-year low? The Shreveport Times reported on 1/23/09 that overall crime “dipped below 1978’s numbers and violent crimes are nearly to the point they were in 1985.”

Given that the perception of crime in our region can impact our success, this is great news. Mayor Glover, Chief Whitehorn and many other city leaders, partners and law enforcement professionals deserve our thanks for moving us in the right direction. Be sure to remember this stat when you talk about and promote our area.

Did you know that the State of Louisiana is among only three states nationally that created net new jobs during 2008? Other than in September 2008 when Ike and Gustav came through the state, Louisiana added jobs every month. The Shreveport-Bossier area ended December 2008 with a small overall gain over December 2007, even with notable downsizing and changes at places such as GM.

Keep an eye on part of the region such as DeSoto Parish, Arcadia and northern Webster Parish, all of whom are seeing success in their efforts to grow their local economies. There still are opportunities in the midst of the waves and noise. We just need to remain ready and proactive.

FOUNDATION PROSPECT “PIPELINE” SNAPSHOT (AS OF FEBRUARY)

Number of Active Projects	48
Capital Investment Potential	\$2.1 - \$2.3 Billion
Employment Potential	8,200 to 10,800

The pipeline has gotten slightly smaller during the last few weeks, but a number of significant projects are hopefully nearing key milestones and decision points in their search processes. We also continue to field new inquiries, though at a bit slower pace at the moment. If you know of a company that the NLEDF or a partner can assist with a growth opportunity/challenge please call us at (318) 677-2536.

INVESTOR THANK YOU

The NLEDF continues to be blessed by the support of so many organizations that remain committed to economic development and the vision of a stronger and more vibrant regional economy. Since the beginning of the year, NLEDF investors have sent in over \$175,000 in paid pledges for the Forward Northwest Louisiana campaign. This sustained commitment allows NW Louisiana to get its messages out and allows prospects to get the assistance they need. Thank you.

The NLEDF also wants to welcome a number of new investor organizations to the NLEDF family. Welcome!

Biomedical Research Foundation of NW LA	Sustaining Investor
Carter Federal Credit Union	Subscribing Investor
Hunt Guillot & Associates LLC	Sustaining Investor
Sound Fighter Systems	Sustaining Investor

PARTING "SHOT"

Since the region is in the midst of hosting the Super Bowl of fishing events, the **2009 Bassmaster Classic** this weekend...

I wanted to share a picture of one of the new boats being built again in Vivian, LA at Caddo Manufacturing (I noted last time that local leaders there were able to get the plant reopened with new owners).

Great looking boat!



NEW NLEDF WEB SITE LAUNCHED IN FEBRUARY

I urge everyone to check out the new NLEDF web site (www.nledf.org) that was launched quietly about two weeks ago. Thanks to **Bayou Internet** for their hard work. While there are still some items being added, it is online with a number of new features including an interactive **Investors Directory**. This is another way the NLEDF tries to highlight those organizations that support regional economic development. Check out your listing and consider adding a company description if you haven't in the past. Contact Le'Sann Smith at (318) 677-2554 or lesann@nledf.org if you have corrections or questions.

Take care and stay positive,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kurt Foreman", is written over a white background.

Kurt Foreman, President

Upcoming Event

LSUS Economic Outlook Conference

Wednesday February 25, 2009

LSUS University Center

8:00 a.m. to noon

(Registration/networking begins at 7:30)

Feel free to pass this along to others who may be interested in economic development activity in Northwest Louisiana. To be added to the list for future briefs, please email Le'Sann Smith at lesann@nledf.org. Thanks for your interest and support of the region. If you wish to be removed from receiving future updates, please reply to this email and put "unsubscribe" in the subject line.