

BUSINESS *Thrives* IN LOUISIANA'S RIVER REGION

By Kimberly Merlot

A few months ago, I was given the opportunity to visit Louisiana's River Region, an area that includes the Port of South Louisiana and the Parishes of St. Charles, St. James and St. John. As I toured the region with representatives of RREDI (River Region Economic Development Initiative), I was not only taken in by the rich culture and the sense of history enveloping the area, but I was also inspired by the atmosphere of community and the cooperation displayed by local and state leaders. Together, they work as one unit, creating a formula for business success and economic growth. Businesses that choose to locate to the region can take advantage of the abundant resources available to them to build a future of progress and prosperity.

Strategically located on the mighty Mississippi River, between New Orleans



Courtesy of The Port of South Louisiana

International Mater Tank Terminals (IMTT) w/ADM Ama grain elevator in the background...located in St. Charles Parish

Louisiana FastStart

Workforce solutions are offered by the state's economic development department through Louisiana FastStart. Louisiana FastStart was created to provide Louisiana businesses with a well-trained workforce. Based upon eligibility, Louisiana FastStart provides training at no cost to qualifying businesses that are locating to Louisiana or current qualifying Louisiana businesses that are expanding their operations within the state. The program currently works with qualifying manufacturing, distribution, corporate headquarters, inbound call centers, R&D operations and digital media businesses.

"We have recruited the best possible team in the nation. Our team is well-prepared to provide any new or expanding company in Louisiana an excellent well-recruited and trained staff aligned with the competencies, behaviors and technical abilities based on that company's specific culture. We are using new technologies to capture and deliver training that are very unique to our business."

— Jeff Lynn, Executive Director of the Louisiana FastStart program

Louisiana FastStart's team of experienced industry training professionals will travel to the customer's current site. Training programs are highly-customized to each customer. Delivery of the training is conducted by the best determined instructional methods. Training occurs on the customer's schedule - 24/7.

Although in operation for a little over a year, Louisiana FastStart has already introduced new innovative selections and training programs with excellent results to over 25 companies in Louisiana.

and Baton Rouge, the area is home to an intermodal transportation network of waterways, roadways, rail and air. Quick access to the Gulf of Mexico allows for swift and expeditious distribution of products throughout the Americas and to the rest of the world. The region has invested heavily in infrastructure and there are more than 20,000 acres of prime property available for future development.

The Port of South Louisiana is the largest tonnage port in the Western Hemisphere. The cargo it handles accounts for over 50 percent of all Louisiana imports/exports. The facilities within St. Charles, St. John the Baptist, and St. James parishes handle more than 226 million short tons of cargo yearly, brought to its terminals via vessels and barges. Over 4,000 oceangoing vessels and 55,000 barges call on the Port of South Louisiana each year, making it top ranked in the country for export tonnage and total tonnage.

Within the 108 miles of deepwater frontage on both banks of the Mississippi River are more than 50 piers and docks. Vessels drafting 45 feet call on the port district throughout the year. Rarely is river commerce halted because of river depth or weather conditions.

"Location, people and the welcoming environment that we had after Katrina, we knew we needed to move off of Magazine Street one day in New Orleans, it just happened sooner. This is God's country in Reserve. We have been able to grow our business and continue gaining the local support from the Port South of Louisiana and St. John the Baptist Parish. We have not even hit our potential; and we are even looking at expanding. This was a great move."

— Anne Lalla Babin, President of NATCO Foods



GloboShip International Terminal, the Port's public terminal... located in St. John Parish

"Our Location in St. Charles Parish has allowed us close proximity to the New Orleans International Airport. This is beneficial for our product air exports and imports and also customer and executive travel. We are less than an hour drive from the major rail yards. The River Region has allowed us to remain close to the Metro New Orleans area while increasing our ability to attract a very diverse workforce, from entry level up to professional and executive level."

"The River Region is very pro-business and responsive to our needs, even on a personal level with local officials. After they worked with the State to originally secure our relocation to the area, they have maintained the same level of responsiveness, even after more than 7 years of operations in the area. The level of service has never diminished 'the honeymoon' has continued."

—Randy Kennedy, Senior V.P. Corporate Operations for Banda Accessories, the world's largest men's accessories company, headquartered in St. Rose in St. Charles Parish.

The River Region boasts one of the largest concentrations of heavy manufacturers in North America. Industry leaders in the energy and chemical sectors continue to invest billions of dollars as they expand operations to capture market opportunities. These comparative advantages have also attracted significant investment by companies in support industries including logistics, business services, metals and others.

Companies can benefit from taking advantage of elements of the state's incentive package, local enticements, affordable energy pricing, an abundance of raw materials and feedstock, and an available, highly-skilled workforce in a right-to-work state. These factors give a powerful competitive edge to companies looking to become more efficient and increase their bottom line.

The River Region offers a comprehensive and competitive package of business incentives for new and existing businesses. Both the state of Louisiana and the parishes of St. Charles, St. John, and St.

James have dedicated funds available for major infrastructure and capital purchases for companies considering locating to the River Region.

“The level of service has never diminished ‘the honeymoon’ has continued.”

—Randy Kennedy

During my visit of the River Region, I found it to be an outstanding place to do business. Not only are factors like an available, highly-skilled workforce, strategic location, an excellent transportation infrastructure and a pro-business climate in place to help businesses grow and prosper, but there is also ample, prime riverfront acreage ready for development. Businesses become part of the community and local leaders are true partners in their success. 🇵🇸

TOP STATE INCENTIVES

QUALITY JOBS PROGRAM: Louisiana's Quality Jobs Program grants businesses engaged in manufacturing or other basic industries cash rebates up to 6% of annual gross payroll.

DIGITAL MEDIA INCENTIVE: Provides a 25% tax credit for qualified production expenditures in Louisiana and a 35% tax credit for Louisiana resident labor expenditures.

MEGA FUNDS: The Louisiana Department of Economic Development maintains a substantial capital reserve fund that is earmarked specifically for assisting in the location, expansion or retention of economic development projects that represent unusually significant economic impacts on the state. The minimum criteria for application of these funds to a project are the creation or retention of at least 500 jobs or a minimum capital investment of US \$500 million.

For a complete list of incentives visit Louisiana Economic Development's website at: www.louisianaeconomicdevelopment.com.

"Dow St. Charles Operations enjoys great support in St. Charles Parish. Spanning a mile on the Mississippi River, we have marine, rail and interstate access. This allows our 20 production units to connect with customers near and far."

The past three years of workforce development have been strong. Starting with K-12 education programs and continuing with two and four year colleges, Louisiana is revolutionizing the local workforce making it easier and quicker to hire the talent needed to run global operations."

The river parishes of Louisiana present opportunity to grow businesses and attract customers. Real estate, welcoming governmental agencies and a strong spirit of cooperation are a perfect mix for Dow St. Charles Operations and others."

—Tommy J. Fauchoux, Public Affairs Manager of Dow St. Charles Operations



Zen-Nik grain elevator... located in St. James Parish