



**ST. TAMMANY**  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

## 5-YEAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN



# THRIVE2029

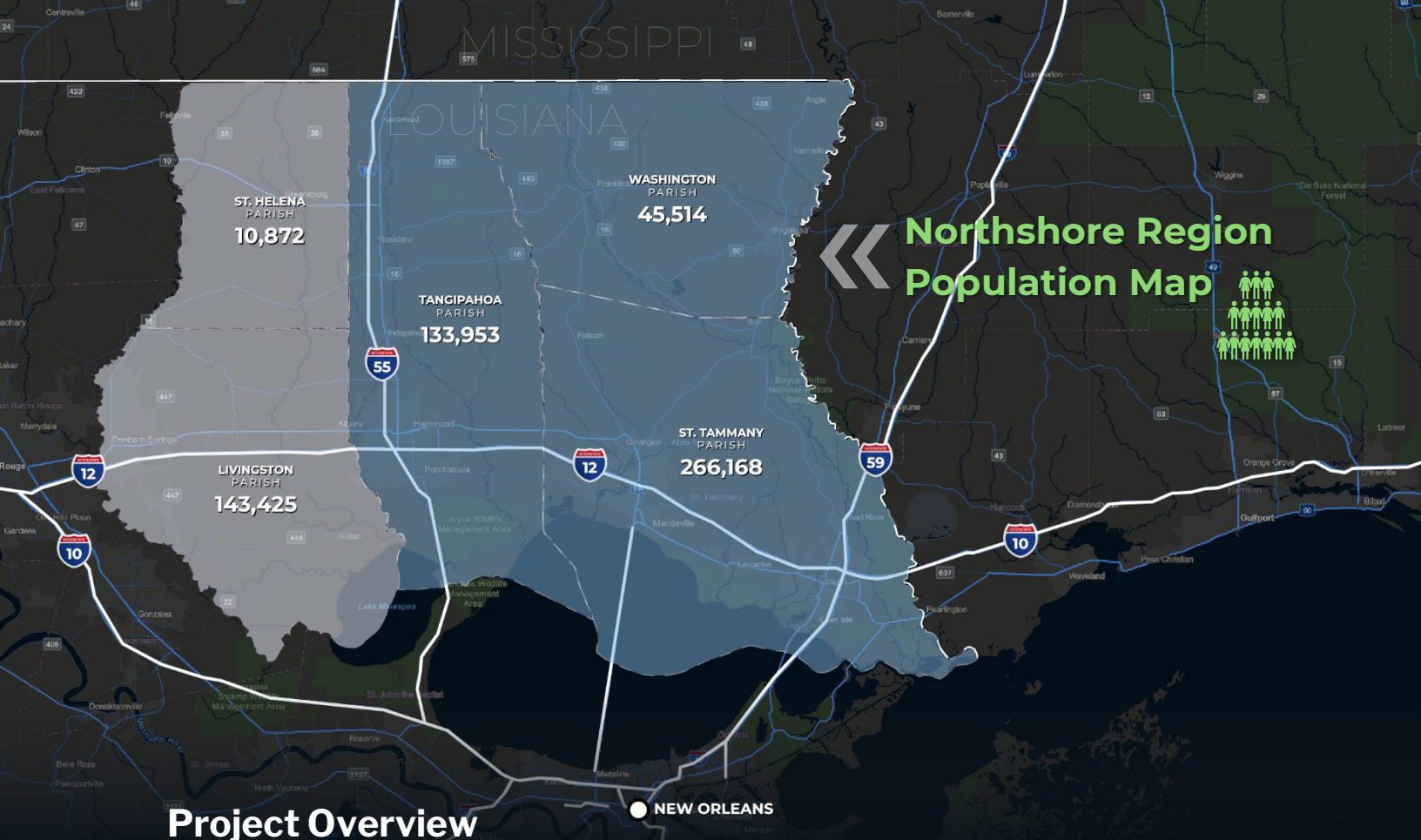
*Enhancing St. Tammany's  
Economic Landscape. 2025-2029*



**VISIONFIRST ADVISORS**  
10 YEARS of STRATEGY, ACTION & RESULTS

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Rapid and unprecedented transformations are reshaping the global economy, investment, trade, and economic development. The dynamics of this evolving marketplace demand a proactive approach to fostering economic resilience and adaptability. For communities and regions alike, the path forward will hinge on their ability to adapt and build upon emerging opportunities. That is why THRIVE2029 is so important.

**Now is the critical moment to assess the landscape and act on these opportunities with a strategic focus.** Government entities, economic development practitioners, industry leaders, and the tourism sector have the chance to collaborate in reshaping policies, forging new partnerships, and exploring educational advancements. Leveraging innovative technologies will be essential to driving progress, creating a competitive edge, and ensuring all residents can thrive.

For St. Tammany Parish and the broader Northshore region, the role of St. Tammany Economic Development Corporation (STEDC) to engage in nimble, responsive problem solving and to align assets and strategic partnerships will be pivotal. How STEDC navigates these opportunities and integrates its strategies will determine the parish's economic trajectory.



## STEDC's Mission, Vision, & Values

The current mission and vision statements have strong, forward-thinking elements but could benefit from some refinement to better resonate with both residents and stakeholders. Below are some thoughts on how each could be improved for clarity and emotional impact. Clarity and emotional impact are crucial when crafting statements – whether for a **mission, vision, values**, or any kind of communication – because they help achieve two goals: **understanding and engagement**.

### MISSION

**Current:** *"As the lead economic development organization for St. Tammany, St. Tammany Economic Development Corporation's mission is to create capacity and sophistication as an organization resulting in transformational leadership with the greater outcome of economic prosperity for all of St. Tammany."*

- The statement is broad and somewhat abstract. Words like "capacity," "sophistication," and "transformational leadership" are important but could be made more relatable and tangible. It may be clearer to focus on concrete actions and outcomes that directly impact residents and businesses.
- The phrase "economic prosperity for all of St. Tammany" is a strong point, but it could be framed more clearly as a benefit for residents, businesses, and the community as a whole.

**SUGGESTED REVISION:** *"St. Tammany Economic Development Corporation leads economic development in our region by fostering the conditions that empower businesses to grow and invest in our community, expanding opportunities that improve quality of life for all St. Tammany residents. Our mission is to drive economic growth by attracting new investment, helping local businesses succeed, and shaping a resilient and competitive local economy."*

This revision emphasizes clear actions (fostering, empowering, investing, expanding, attracting) and connects directly to the community's well-being.

### VISION

**Current:** *"Our vision is to strategically align the economic landscape in St. Tammany to be the destination of choice for highly skilled talent and business formation, attraction, expansion, and retention."*

- The vision is focused on talent and business growth, which is great, but it could be strengthened by articulating the broader impact on the community and residents—not just businesses and talent.
- Also, "align the economic landscape" could be made more specific and practical to ensure it's clear what this means in terms of actual change.

**SUGGESTED REVISION:** " Our vision is to strategically align the economic landscape in St. Tammany to be the destination of choice for dynamic talent and business growth and investment, advancing our community's prosperity through collaboration and engagement."

Business growth is defined by business development, formation, expansion, and attraction, as well as the capital investment made to fuel those activities. This version highlights the benefits to both individuals (talent, entrepreneurs, industries) and the community (collaboration, engagement), making it more inclusive and resonant.

Both statements are aspirational, which is important for leadership in economic development. However, simplifying the language and focusing on tangible, community-driven outcomes can make them more relatable. **Stakeholders (e.g., industries, entrepreneurs, investors) will likely appreciate the focus on economic growth, attraction, and retention, while residents may better connect to language that emphasizes opportunity, quality of life and local benefits.**

## VALUES

These values outline exactly who The St. Tammany Economic Development Corporation is as an organization and clearly outlines what others can expect from us as leaders, partners, and truth-tellers. THRIVE tells us exactly where we are going and how we will measure our effectiveness and success.

<b>Transformational</b>	We aim to elevate our relationships with businesses and industries beyond mere transactions, fostering true partnerships and strategic alliances that drive meaningful transformation—enhancing St. Tammany's capacity as a premier business destination.
<b>Honest</b>	Honesty and integrity are fundamental to economic development. As an economic development organization, we must clearly define our scope, services, values, and impact to foster trust and transparency.
<b>Results-Driven</b>	We aim to move beyond inputs and outputs to focus on results. By leveraging data tools to assess our community's current position, we can develop strategic initiatives that drive positive outcomes, enhancing competitiveness for business, industry, and talent.
<b>Intentional</b>	Economic development isn't one-size-fits-all. We are intentional in our efforts, focusing on workforce, placemaking, small business, and site development to drive sustainable growth.
<b>Vital</b>	The economic development organization plays a vital role in sustaining and enhancing St. Tammany's quality of life. As the truth-teller of the parish's economic vitality, St. Tammany Corporation ensures transparency, accountability, and meaningful capacity building.

<p><b>Engaged</b></p>	<p>The economic development organization must actively engage with key partners—business, government, education, and industry groups—while staying ahead of economic trends and best practices. St. Tammany Corporation prioritizes lifelong learning, listening to stakeholders, and anticipating economic challenges.</p>
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## Introduction

St. Tammany Economic Development Corporation (STEDC) is the economic development organization for St. Tammany Parish, located just north of New Orleans. The organization’s primary role is to promote economic growth and development in the area by nurturing startups and second-stage companies, attracting new businesses to the region, supporting existing businesses, and fostering a favorable environment for economic expansion.

The organization has worked tirelessly on various initiatives, including business recruitment, support for entrepreneurship, workforce development, and infrastructure improvements. It aims to enhance the local economy, create jobs and improve the overall quality of life in St. Tammany Parish and the Northshore region.

The Northshore region of Louisiana refers to the landmass situated on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain, particularly St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, and Washington parishes.

## Overview & Approach

In January 2018, the St. Tammany Parish Development District expanded its scope and capacity by hiring a full staff and assuming the responsibility as the lead economic development organization. Since that time, the District rebranded itself as the St. Tammany Corporation and has aggressively undertaken the implementation of their initial five-year strategic plan, THRIVE2023. While the parish continues to grow, the competition for jobs and private capital is increasingly more difficult. As such, economic development organizations must constantly plan, implement, and re-evaluate, and adjust to market conditions to remain competitive. Additionally, communities must consider a broader approach to growing the economy and addressing existing barriers to ensure prosperity for all segments of the population. In February 2025, aligned with the adoption of the organization’s first business attraction and marketing plan, the organization updated its brand and name to the St. Tammany Economic Development Corporation (STEDC). This further solidifies the organization as the sole economic development entity in St. Tammany and reinforces its charge and mission. The following pages contain an updated strategic economic development plan for STEDC, including a suite of recommendations that position the organization to continue moving forward as a recognized high-performing economic development entity.

Using this assessment as a catalyst, parish leaders must unify themselves to take advantage of the community’s assets, overcome its challenges, and work together to ensure the organization’s success. Outlined below is the approach and steps taken.

**Overarching goals in conducting the competitive economic development assessment:**

- Conducted a comprehensive operational and organizational assessment of STEDC and its work.
- Conducted a competitive review of economic development in St. Tammany Parish looking at barriers and opportunities.
- Recommended and developed collaborative strategies to benefit the entire parish.
- Developed a suite of recommendations that will allow STEDC to continue its momentum as a high-performing economic development organization as well as strategic short term, midterm, and long-term initiatives for implementation.

#### **The project approach included:**

- Reviewed previous initiatives and plans and assessed progress to date.
- Gathered input from numerous stakeholders and community members through town halls and a community survey.
- Gathered and analyzed relevant data and trends.
- Conducted research to understand threats, challenges, and opportunities.
- Assimilated, reviewed, and analyzed trends, findings, and research.
- Developed a suite of recommendations identifying:
  - Steps to enable the organization to continue its maturity as a highly performing economic development entity.
  - Strategies and tactics in which to grow the economy.
  - Marketing and communications tactics to tell the story of STEDC and the parish's overall impact on the economic landscape, quality of life, and competitive attributes to both internal and external stakeholders, decision makers, and investors.

## **The Voice of Stakeholders**

The initial step to update STEDC's strategic plan focused on obtaining the voice of community leaders, businesses, and government partner leadership. Based on STEDC's recommendations, VisionFirst conducted in-person interviews and facilitated discussions gathering key stakeholder input.

This open dialogue provided context as VisionFirst evaluated progress since the initial plan and developed strategies that reflect the priorities of the community, focusing on existing challenges identified and developing strategies to ensure the highest and best use of the community's assets.

Although the interviews and public meetings elicited important baseline information, the strategies recommended later in the report are not merely a compilation of the feedback provided. Instead, they are built around the firm's insight, experience, and industry best practices as well as empirical data gathered related to the community. Below offers a snapshot of stakeholders' viewpoints and perspectives.

#### **Workforce Development and Education**

- Focus on aligning workforce initiatives within high schools and post-secondary institutions to the needs of industry.

- Challenges in raising awareness about available workforce programs among local businesses.
- Strive to reduce the outward commute from St. Tammany Parish each day.
- There is a need for more internships and hands-on learning opportunities.

### **Collaboration and Integration**

- A call for better collaboration among various stakeholders, including businesses, chambers of commerce, tourism, and workforce development boards.
- Formalize partnerships to enhance alignment, coordination, and integration.

### **Economic Development Challenges**

- Lack of support from parish government partners
- Lack of public education regarding basic economic development
- Difficulty in doing business due to government permitting and zoning processes and timelines.
- Disconnect between citizens, the business community, and government officials, highlighting the need for better communication and engagement.
- Insurance costs have resulted in businesses moving outside the area and state.

### **Infrastructure and Resources**

- Insufficient investment in utility infrastructure (especially water and sewer) is a major concern for managing growth.
- Negative attitudes towards private investment by Parish government professional and technical staff
- There is a need for shovel-ready properties for businesses and industry to facilitate development.
- Aging individual sewage systems are resulting in environmental issues.
- Lack of funding for infrastructure due to mandated public safety costs combined with a failure to pass tax referendum within the parish.
- Lack of innovative thinking by Parish government for private public partnerships.

### **Regional Competitiveness**

- Recognition of competition from neighboring parishes, regions, and states.
- Leverage local advantages, such as proximity to interstates and markets.

### **Marketing and Branding**

- The need for consistent branding and effective marketing strategies to attract businesses and investments.
- Highlighting past workforce improvements to demonstrate progress.

### **Housing Concerns**

- Addressing the need for affordable workforce housing to holistically support all employees, families, and employers in the region.

### **Bureaucratic Processes**

- Identifying bureaucratic hurdles in the development approval processes to aid timeliness and investment.



- Inconsistency of permitting and development process
- Lengthy permitting approval timing can exceed six months.
- The need to eliminate or consolidate various taxing districts.
- Excess delays in planning review from Parish utility and engineering departments

### **Growth and Development Pressures**

- Managing rapid population growth (fourth most populous in the state) creates challenges in planning and resource allocation.
- Balancing the needs of residential development with business and industrial growth, especially considering community resistance to industrial projects.
- Lack of land use and zoning policies have resulted in discord and difficulty in obtaining permits for business projects.

### **Funding and Financial Constraints**

- Challenges related to funding mandated expenses for criminal justice and other governmental services due to failed revenue initiatives and lack of public trust.
- Discussion of the need for tax reform and the reliance on a 2% sales tax for revenue generation within the parish.
- The tax base of the parish is primarily residential. An increase in business and industrial property could provide some relief from the high property tax rates in the parish.
- Proactive strategies to advancing public-private partnerships to help address development challenges.

### **Community Engagement and Understanding**

- There is a gap in citizen understanding regarding where tax revenues are allocated and how they support local services.
- The need for better communication, awareness and education about local tax structures and funding challenges.

### **Zoning and Land Use Planning**

- Current zoning and land use policies are under review to better accommodate future development and commercial growth.
- Efforts to designate suitable areas for advanced manufacturing and logistics, particularly near Gulf South Commerce Park.

These themes collectively indicate a focus on enhancing workforce readiness, improving stakeholder collaboration, and addressing regional economic challenges to foster economic growth.

## The Voice of the Community

Beyond key stakeholders in the economic development process, it was important to provide a mechanism for interested community members to give input. Resident input is essential for not only the development of the strategic plan but to build a base of understanding and support to accomplish the goals which are laid out. Community feedback provides what perceptions around the strategic plan process exist, what type of growth and industry is wanted, residents' thoughts about the region's future, and how they feel about the quality of life that they currently enjoy.

To that end, VisionFirst Advisors, along with STEDC leadership, sought public input through an online survey. More than 100 residents and business owners completed the survey. Age distribution: 44.5% were over 60, 34.5 % were between 45-59, 17% were 30-44 and 14% were 18-29. Additionally, more than 50% of respondents have lived in the area for over 20 years.

**Q1: From an economic development standpoint, where would you like to see the St. Tammany Parish/the Northshore region in five years? Top three.**

Low unemployment (everyone who wants a job has a job)	31.68%
Positive population growth	11.88%
Home to diverse industries	29.70%
Incremental increase of per capita income over time	22.77%
Supportive of start-ups and entrepreneurs	32.67%
A region with vibrant downtowns and neighborhoods that appeal to young business leaders and families	45.54%
A region that offers high-achieving educational options from Pre-K through the college level (including community and technical education)	55.45%

**Q2: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement about our parish/regional economy?**

	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE
All residents have equal access to economic opportunity	39.80%	29.59%	30.61%
Wages and salaries make it possible to maintain my standard of living	34.69%	28.57%	36.73%
Education and job training is available to residents who want or need it	46.46%	26.26%	27.27%
Businesses are growing	38.78%	35.71%	25.51%
Entrepreneurs can start and succeed	41.84%	34.69%	23.47%
The region attracts businesses or is seen as a business destination	29.00%	33.00%	38.00%
The region attracts visitors or is seen as a visitor destination	28.87%	39.18%	31.96%
Local government and business cooperate on community and economic development initiatives	25.51%	31.63%	42.86%
The overall mix of employers (manufacturing, professional, retail, business, etc.) is adequate	20.20%	29.29%	50.51%

### Q3: What do you see as the community's greatest strengths and biggest weaknesses?

	WEAKNESS	NOT A STRENGTH	STRENGTH	SUBSTANTIAL STRENGTH
Affordability	29.29%	44.44%	23.23%	3.03%
Ease of doing business locally/government regulatory environment	32.65%	40.82%	22.45%	4.08%
Available sites/buildings for new industry or expansions	13.13%	28.28%	46.46%	12.12%
Workforce skills and availability	13.27%	38.78%	36.73%	11.22%
Workforce costs	15.46%	44.33%	32.99%	7.22%
Access and affordability of high-speed internet for home and business	13.40%	27.84%	42.27%	16.49%
Quality of life amenities	13.00%	13.00%	42.00%	32.00%
State tax environment	44.90%	39.80%	12.24%	3.06%
Local tax environment	43.30%	41.24%	12.37%	3.09%
Connectivity – location, traffic, and roadways	50.52%	22.68%	17.53%	9.28%
Support for existing industry growth and expansion	26.80%	40.21%	29.90%	3.09%
Technical support of entrepreneurs and small business	17.35%	42.86%	33.67%	6.12%
Education (public and private)	12.24%	19.39%	52.04%	16.33%
Opportunities for higher education including technical training	16.33%	27.55%	33.67%	22.45%
Crime and personal safety	7.14%	10.20%	46.94%	35.71%
Housing options (rental and home ownership)	22.68%	34.02%	35.05%	8.25%
Organized business leadership	19.39%	29.59%	43.88%	7.14%
A shared vision of where the region is going	42.86%	36.73%	17.35%	3.06%

### Q4: When it comes to utilities, infrastructure, communications, and transportation, how would you rate the following?

	MEETS OUR NEEDS	IMPROVEMENTS ARE NECESSARY	SERIOUS PROBLEMS EXIST	NO OPINION
Utilities	33.67%	45.92%	18.37%	2.04%
Cell phone service	65.66%	24.24%	8.08%	2.02%
Internet/broadband service	54.55%	28.28%	14.14%	3.03%
Parish/city road and streets	15.31%	41.84%	41.84%	1.02%
Interstates and state highways	29.59%	40.82%	27.55%	2.04%

### Q5: When it comes to quality of place amenities and facilities, how would you rate the following?

	MEETS OUR NEEDS	IMPROVEMENTS ARE NECESSARY	SERIOUS PROBLEMS EXIST	NO OPINION
Parks/recreation/trail offerings	64.65%	30.30%	5.05%	0.00%
Retail and shopping services	67.35%	23.47%	8.16%	1.02%
Entertainment, nightlife, and dining	48.48%	37.37%	9.09%	5.05%
Daycare options	21.43%	27.55%	19.39%	31.63%

Healthcare services	61.86%	24.74%	12.37%	1.03%
Arts/cultural programs/facilities	43.00%	44.00%	6.00%	7.00%
Overall community appearance	40.40%	46.46%	11.11%	2.02%

**Q6: When it comes to educational opportunities and choices, how would you rate the following?**

	MEETS OUR NEEDS	IMPROVEMENTS ARE NECESSARY	SERIOUS PROBLEMS EXIST	NO OPINION
Pre-school opportunities/choices	38.38%	20.20%	13.13%	28.28%
Elementary school opportunities/choices	43.43%	30.30%	8.08%	18.18%
Secondary school opportunities/choices	42.00%	31.00%	8.00%	19.00%
Post-secondary school opportunities/choices	38.00%	31.00%	19.00%	12.00%

**Q7: When it comes to housing, how would you rate the following?**

	MEETS OUR NEEDS	IMPROVEMENTS ARE NECESSARY	SERIOUS PROBLEMS EXIST	NO OPINION
Overall condition of housing stock	43.43%	35.35%	18.18%	3.03%
Overall affordability of housing	24.00%	36.00%	37.00%	3.00%
Availability of single-family homes	40.81%	30.61%	24.49%	4.08%
Availability of apartment units	44.33%	18.56%	20.62%	16.49%
Affordability of apartment units	19.39%	30.61%	32.65%	17.35%
Number of buildable lots	48.48%	24.24%	9.09%	18.18%
Contractor/builder availability	62.58%	19.59%	11.34%	16.49%
Nursing/assisted living home units	30.61%	34.69%	11.34%	16.49%

**Q8: Describe the regulatory landscape and ease of doing business with the various government partners in our landscape?**

	SEAMLESS PROCESS	AVERAGE PROCESS	CONFUSING PROCESS	CHALLENGING PROCESS	NO OPINION
City/Municipal Government	4.95%	30.69%	17.82%	27.72%	18.81%
Parish Government	2.97%	21.78%	16.83%	46.53%	11.88%
State Government	3.96%	19.80%	21.78%	37.62%	16.83%

**Q9: What type of business and industry growth do you want to see in St. Tammany Parish and the Northshore region?**

Advanced manufacturing/light industry (distribution/warehousing operations, advance manufacturing, etc.)	49.50%
Service providers (medical, financial, higher education, etc.)	40.59%
Home-grown/local entrepreneurial businesses	57.43%
Business services (accounting, financial services)	20.79%
Agriculture or timber-related businesses	5.94%
Technology services (call centers, software development, IT)	52.48%
Retail	20.79%
Tourism, hospitality, and recreation	33.66%
None, I prefer to keep the existing level of business and industry	6.93%

**Q10: What do you believe are the biggest challenges for St. Tammany Parish?**

These open-ended questions cover a variety of concerns related to the development, infrastructure, economy, and quality of life in St. Tammany Parish. Key themes from the responses include:

**Infrastructure & Growth Management**

- **Traffic & Roads:** Many respondents highlighted poor traffic flow and inadequate road infrastructure, especially with new development outpacing infrastructure improvements. Concerns include congestion, poorly maintained roads, and a lack of east-west routes.
- **Drainage & Flooding:** Drainage issues, flooding and the need for better flood protection are frequently mentioned, with calls for improved systems to support both existing and future developments.
- **Over-development:** The rapid pace of residential and commercial development without accompanying infrastructure improvements is a significant concern.

**Economic Development & Affordability**

- **Cost of Living:** High taxes, insurance and housing costs are major complaints, with many expressing frustrations over the financial strain these factors place on residents and businesses. There's a desire for more affordable housing, especially for middle-income families and teachers, as well as for better-paying jobs.
- **Retail & Business Climate:** There is a desire for more diverse retail options, especially fine dining, and grocery stores in underserved areas. However, the business environment is seen as challenging due to high costs, bureaucracy, and government red tape, making it difficult to attract new businesses.
- **Affordable Housing:** Many responses mention the lack of affordable housing options, with concerns that high housing costs are contributing to economic inequality and driving residents to neighboring areas.



## Government & Leadership Issues

- **Government Efficiency:** Frustration with local governance is evident, with claims of excessive bureaucracy, political gridlock, and a lack of coordination between government entities. The permitting process and slow pace of change are seen as major obstacles to progress.
- **Political Influence:** There are strong concerns about political interference, corruption, and the influence of developers in local decision-making. Some respondents feel that development decisions are driven more by the interests of developers and wealthy stakeholders rather than the needs of residents.

## Public Services & Community Engagement

- **Public Schools:** The decline in public education quality, particularly after the pandemic, is a significant concern. There's a call for reforms to improve schools and attract families to the parish.
- **Community Spaces & Recreation:** There is a desire for more community spaces, including parks, recreational areas, and places for teens to gather. Some also express frustration with the lack of adequate amenities like bike trails and green spaces.
- **Social Issues:** Issues such as homelessness, mental health, and the general well-being of the community are raised, with calls for more support services for vulnerable populations.

## Environmental Concerns

- **Environmental Impact:** Several respondents are concerned about the environmental degradation, including wetland loss and the impact of overbuilding on natural resources.
- **Sustainability:** There are calls for more focus on sustainable development, recycling programs and environmental stewardship.

## Quality of Life

- **Aesthetics & Community Identity:** Many residents feel that the area lacks aesthetic appeal and a clear sense of identity, with a desire to enhance the parish's visual character and overall livability.
- **Youth & Family Opportunities:** There are concerns about a lack of recreational opportunities for teens and young families, and some respondents suggest that the community needs more non-bar venues for socializing.

## Housing and Transportation

- **Affordable Housing:** There's a clear need for more affordable workforce housing options to accommodate the growing population, with many expressing concerns over rising housing costs that make it difficult for middle- and lower-income families to live in the area.
- **Transportation:** Beyond traffic, there's a need for more efficient public transportation options and better planning to improve connectivity and reduce congestion.

## Social Issues

- **Crime & Safety:** Some responses mention concerns about crime, particularly in relation to illegal immigration and social unrest. There is a call for better community safety programs.
- **Social Divides:** The East-West divide in the parish is noted, with some suggesting that the eastern side of the parish is neglected in terms of development and resources.

Overall, the responses reflect a desire for more balanced growth, better infrastructure, improved public services and a more inclusive approach to development. There is a common plea for the parish to address these challenges before further expanding or overdeveloping the area.

### Q11: What do you believe are the biggest strengths for St. Tammany Parish?

These open-ended responses highlight several strengths of St. Tammany Parish, primarily focusing on quality of life, safety, education, natural beauty, and community involvement. Key themes include:

#### Safety & Low Crime Rates

- **Safety** is a consistent theme across responses, with many noting the low crime rate and the presence of law enforcement as key factors contributing to the overall appeal of the area. The parish is seen as a relatively safe place to live, particularly in comparison to nearby urban areas.

#### Education

- **Quality of Schools:** Strong public schools, both K-12 and private options, are frequently mentioned as a major strength. Many respondents emphasize the importance of good education for attracting families and maintaining a high quality of life.
- **Workforce Development:** Education is also linked to workforce development, with mentions of technical training and higher education options contributing to the local economy and workforce readiness.

#### Natural Beauty & Outdoor Activities

- **Natural Resources:** The parish's **natural beauty** is widely appreciated, with residents valuing its rivers, lakes, forests, and green spaces. There's a strong emphasis on the importance of preserving these resources.
- **Recreation:** Parks, trails, and access to outdoor activities are also highlighted as important quality-of-life features, contributing to the area's appeal for families and nature enthusiasts.

#### Community & Family-Friendly Atmosphere

- **Community Involvement:** Many responses mention the strong sense of community and the willingness of residents to contribute to making St. Tammany a great place to live. Local events in towns like Covington, Mandeville, Slidell, and Abita Springs are also seen as fostering community connections.

- **Family-Oriented:** The parish is described as a great place to raise a family, with good schools, low crime and a family-friendly environment being top priorities for residents.

### **Business & Economic Development**

- **Potential for Business Growth:** There is a strong belief in the potential for **economic development**, especially given the area's location and available land. Respondents see opportunities for new businesses, especially along major highways like I-12 and see room for growth without losing the area's charm.
- **Small Businesses:** There's also appreciation for **local businesses** and small-town commerce, with the community showing support for these enterprises.

### **Location & Accessibility**

- **Proximity to New Orleans:** The parish's **location** is seen as a major strength, with many noting its easy access to New Orleans while maintaining a more suburban or small-town feel. This gives residents a balance of access to urban amenities without the congestion of city life.
- **Transportation:** Access to major highways and interstates like I-12 is seen as a valuable feature for both commuters and businesses.

### **Quality of Life & Affordability**

- **Quality of Life:** Respondents frequently describe the parish as offering a **high quality of life**, with amenities like good schools, parks, low crime, and natural beauty contributing to the overall appeal.
- **Affordability:** While the area is seen as relatively **affordable** for some, there are occasional mentions that living costs may be rising, making it less accessible for all residents, especially lower-income families.

### **Civic Engagement & Governance**

- **Local Government:** Some respondents mention that local governance and leadership are improving, with a sense that the parish is moving in a positive direction. However, there is also mention of residents pushing back against certain developments or policies they don't agree with.

### **Cultural & Social Amenities**

- **Cultural Events:** The availability of **cultural events**, local festivals and social gatherings is seen as a positive aspect of life in St. Tammany, contributing to the sense of community and offering opportunities for engagement.
- **Dining & Entertainment:** While not as heavily emphasized as other themes, the availability of dining and entertainment options is still viewed positively, especially in towns like Mandeville and Covington.

## Environmental Conservation

- **Preservation of Green Spaces:** Many respondents emphasize the need to preserve the parish's **green spaces** and natural resources as key strengths of the area.

Overall, respondents seem to value the parish's combination of **safety, natural beauty,** and **family-friendly atmosphere**, as well as its potential for **economic growth** and **business development**. However, there is some concern about maintaining the **affordability** and **quality of life** as the population grows.

**Q12: What should be St Tammany Parish's and the Northshore region's top priorities for economic development? What would you like the region to achieve? Top three.**

Create a unified vision and strategy for regional growth	23.76%
Diversify the economic base and create new higher-paying jobs	37.62%
Encourage the growth of existing businesses and industries	26.73%
Encourage downtown revitalization	16.83%
Create a strong entrepreneurial climate	16.83%
Increase jobs skills of local labor force	18.81%
Improve the quality of life and regional amenities such as livability and recreation	22.77%
Help improve local schools	14.85%
Improve availability of a range of housing options	12.87%
Improve government cooperation on a regional level	12.87%
Attract and retain young professionals and families	14.85%
Improve access and affordability of high-speed internet for home and business	3.96%
Improve infrastructure (roads, drainage, utilities)	47.52%
Other	14.86

## Data-at-a-Glance

VisionFirst Advisors, along with Ted Abernathy of Economic Leadership LLC, conducted a thorough data analysis of St. Tammany Parish and the five parishes in the Northshore region, using a variety of perspectives. data provides a baseline of information to educate, inform and better position the community.



**A data-driven, decision-making approach can often be the first step in how site selectors and business decision makers evaluate a location after understanding the needs of the client.**

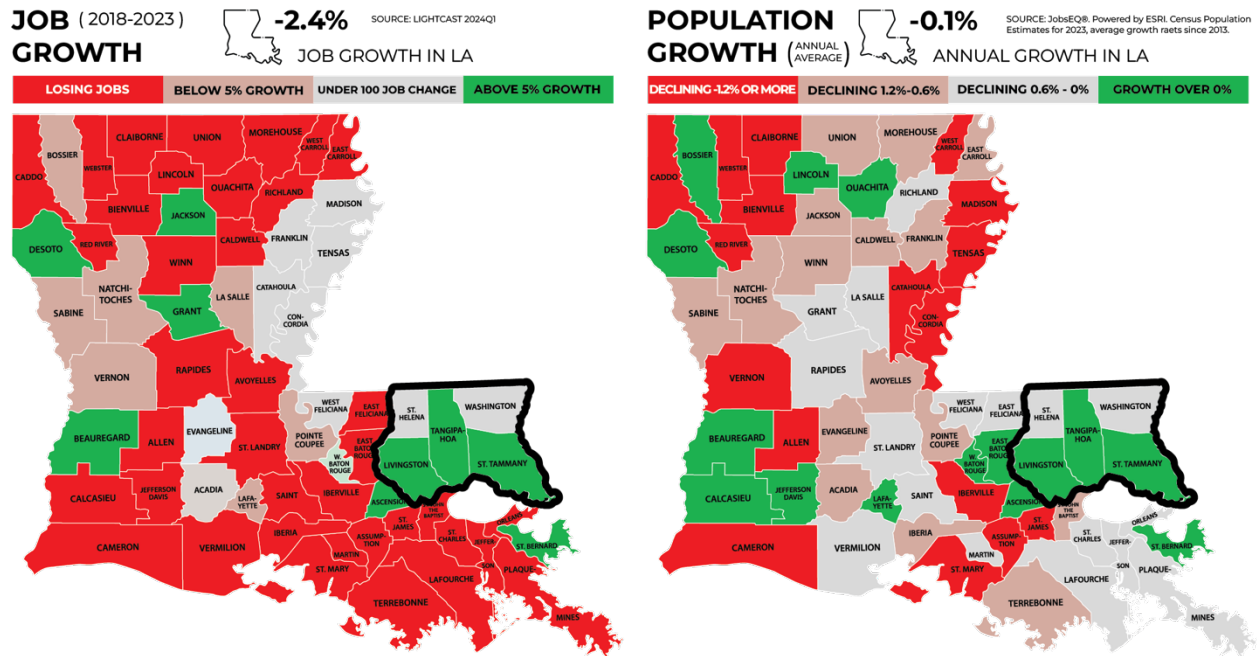
Economic development projects often begin with the consideration of states and defined geographic regions (i.e., metros, electric utility service territories). Rarely does a prospect, company or site selector have a specific community in mind. However, communities can increase their visibility through increased internal and external messaging, while also having a strong online presence. Accurate and up-to-date data and statistical information help decision makers conduct a cost-benefit analysis offering an idea of the project's likelihood for success in the region.

Because site selectors and location advisors often review high-level data prior to a visit, it is vital for STEDC to understand and analyze data from an online data viewpoint to:

- Highlight favorable data in the region that indicates a bottom-line advantage to a company.
- Recognize less favorable data that could cause a potential threat to a company, while explaining how the community and Region are addressing issues.
- Recognize flawed data and provide alternative yet reliable aggregated data.
- Understand how the data may conflict with the perception of residents and work with internal stakeholders to balance the narrative.



**Figure 1: Job Growth/Population Growth**



The Northshore region is often appreciated for its strategic geographic position between New Orleans and Baton Rouge, offering residents a quieter, more rural alternative while still being within reach of the city’s cultural and economic opportunities. Since the creation of STEDC’s first 5-year economic development strategic plan known as THRIVE2023, the parish has seen significant growth over the last five years. With a population now more than 265,000 and a growing region, Northshore, and St. Tammany parish are positioned for additional growth.

**Figure 2: Population Growth by Parish**

Northshore Region	Demographics – Population (ACS)	Population Growth - Annual Average Growth
<b>St. Tammany Parish</b>	<b>266,168</b>	<b>1.3%</b>
Livingston Parish	143,425	1.2%
St. Helena Parish	10,872	0.0%
Tangipahoa Parish	133,953	1.0%
Washington Parish	45,514	-0.3%
Louisiana	4,640,546	-0.1%

## ST. TAMMANY PARISH

## KEY ECONOMIC MEASUREMENTS



Data provided by VisionFirst Advisors using Chmura's JobsEQ Analytics Tool

## NORTHSHORE 5-PARISH REGION

## KEY ECONOMIC MEASUREMENTS



Data provided by VisionFirst Advisors using Chmura's JobsEQ Analytics Tool

## Key benefits of the parish and region include:

### STRATEGIC LOCATION

- **Proximity to Major Cities:** St. Tammany Parish is close to New Orleans, providing access to a large market, transportation hubs and a robust business ecosystem. This proximity also connects businesses to the global market via the Port of New Orleans.
- **Transportation Infrastructure:** The parish is well-served by major highways (such as Interstate 12, Interstate 10, and Interstate 59), railroads and is close to major airports and ports, facilitating efficient logistics and distribution.

### ECONOMIC INCENTIVES

- **Tax Incentives:** Businesses in St. Tammany Parish can benefit from various tax incentives and credits offered by local, state, and federal programs. These incentives can reduce operational costs and improve financial viability.
- **Application & Compliance Support:** STEDC offers hands-on assistance to businesses applying for incentive programs, helping with documentation, eligibility assessments, compliance monitoring, and coordination with local and state agencies to ensure a smooth and successful process.

### BUSINESS-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT

- **Supportive Local Government:** Local government in the City of Slidell and the Town of Pearl River are recognized for being business-friendly, providing support through economic development initiatives. However, some have noted the St. Tammany Parish government permitting process can be a hindrance to speed in bringing projects to market. Additionally, many residents have expressed concerns about the rapid growth in the area, fearing that it could strain infrastructure and change the character of their communities.
- **Economic Development Organizations:** St. Tammany Economic Development Corporation and supporting organizations (state and regional EDOs and utility economic development teams) provide resources and assistance for businesses, including site selection, grants, and funding opportunities.

### QUALITY OF PLACE

- **Attractive Living Conditions:** St. Tammany Parish is known for its high quality of life, including good schools, healthcare facilities and recreational opportunities. This can help attract and retain top talent.
- **Affordable Real Estate:** In general, real estate in St. Tammany Parish tends to be more affordable compared to New Orleans, though there are some variations depending on the specific area and property type. According to [Redfin](#), in January 2025, the median sale price for homes in St. Tammany Parish was \$320,000. In contrast, New Orleans had a median sale price of \$330,000 during the same period.

St. Tammany has been growing in popularity as a suburban area, attracting buyers who are looking for more space, quieter neighborhoods, and often a lower cost of living than in New Orleans. Homes in areas like Mandeville, Covington, and Slidell offer more square footage for the same price and property taxes tend to be lower.

In contrast, New Orleans' real estate market has become more expensive, particularly neighborhoods such as the French Quarter, Garden District, and other desirable parts of the city.

While New Orleans offers more urban amenities, including cultural attractions, nightlife, and proximity to employment hubs, the cost of living is higher than in the surrounding suburbs like St. Tammany. In recent years, demand for real estate in St. Tammany has been rising, which has pushed prices up in some parts of the parish, though it still tends to be more affordable overall than New Orleans.

### SKILLED WORKFORCE

- **Access to Talent:** The parish has a diverse and skilled workforce, supported by local educational institutions and training programs that align with industry needs.
- **Workforce Development Programs:** Local programs and partnerships with educational institutions help to ensure a steady pipeline of qualified workers, addressing skills gaps in various industries.

### ECONOMIC STABILITY AND GROWTH

- **Growing Economy:** St. Tammany Parish has experienced steady economic growth, providing a stable environment for business operations and investments.
- **Diverse Economic Base:** The local economy is well-rounded, with key sectors such as healthcare, education, retail, manufacturing, and tourism. This diversity helps reduce reliance on any single industry and creates a range of opportunities across different fields. However, the parish faces a significant challenge in that its tax base is heavily reliant on residential properties, lacking broader diversity.

### COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS NETWORK

- **Local Business Networks:** The area boasts a strong network of local businesses and organizations that can provide valuable connections, support, and collaboration opportunities.
- **Community Involvement:** Businesses often find that engaging with the local community enhances their reputation and can lead to positive relationships and brand loyalty.

### RECREATIONAL AND CULTURAL AMENITIES

- **Quality Amenities:** St. Tammany Parish offers a range of recreational and cultural amenities, such as parks, restaurants, and cultural events, which contribute to a vibrant community life and can enhance employee satisfaction and retention.

To increase business growth, industry diversification, and economic prosperity for the parish, STEDC should use this plan as a springboard to solidify its position as a high-performing economic development organization. As a high-performing EDO, STEDC is already seeking avenues to continue and bolster these efforts by bringing together the community's assets, resources, and stakeholders to collaborate for a common objective.

As the plan is rolled out, it is imperative that all in the community understand it is a “crawl, walk, run” approach that is designed to parallel the ramp up of STEDC. The challenge will be moving quickly to implement immediate strategies and tactics while at the same time developing a system and process that supports a more holistic approach to economic development.

By collaborating with stakeholders throughout the parish to leverage assets and mitigate weaknesses, the parish will continue to grow in a way that it serves as a point of pride for residents while also offering economic opportunity to all that call the parish home.



## Recommendations

STEDC has made significant progress since the adoption of its initial strategic plan, THRIVE2023. STEDC has transformed into a proactive organization, gaining trust and recognition throughout the parish, region, and state. The strategic focus on local and regional economic development has proven successful, and it is essential to maintain this momentum.

A key achievement of the STEDC is the development of Gulf South Commerce Park, which serves as a land asset that can be promoted to site selectors. This initiative positions St. Tammany Parish as a competitive option for industrial opportunities, helping to enhance its visibility in the market.

Despite these accomplishments, STEDC faces several ongoing landscape challenges. While some issues can be addressed internally, many will necessitate collaboration with external partners to drive meaningful change. The following framework outlines the three distinct roles that STEDC can embrace to effectively tackle challenges and further enhance the region's economic landscape.

**Figure 3: Three Pillars of Economic Growth**



Stakeholders must recognize that economic development organizations face three types of challenges. The first category centers on market opportunities, where decisions rely on existing data. For instance, consider a Cheesecake Factory deciding to establish a location in a community. This decision is typically made at the corporate headquarters level, based on factors such as the number of residents, average household income, and the ease of conducting business in the target market.

Additionally, economic development organizations face challenges where they have significant influence but lack full control. These involve facilitated strategies, such as workforce development, which depend on the organization's input. However, the ultimate decisions fall outside the organization's jurisdiction.

Finally, competitive strategies in economic development are usually spearheaded by the organization. These efforts include establishing targeted industries, identifying and promoting suitable sites, attracting new industries, and fostering business retention and expansion.

## Sector Evaluation

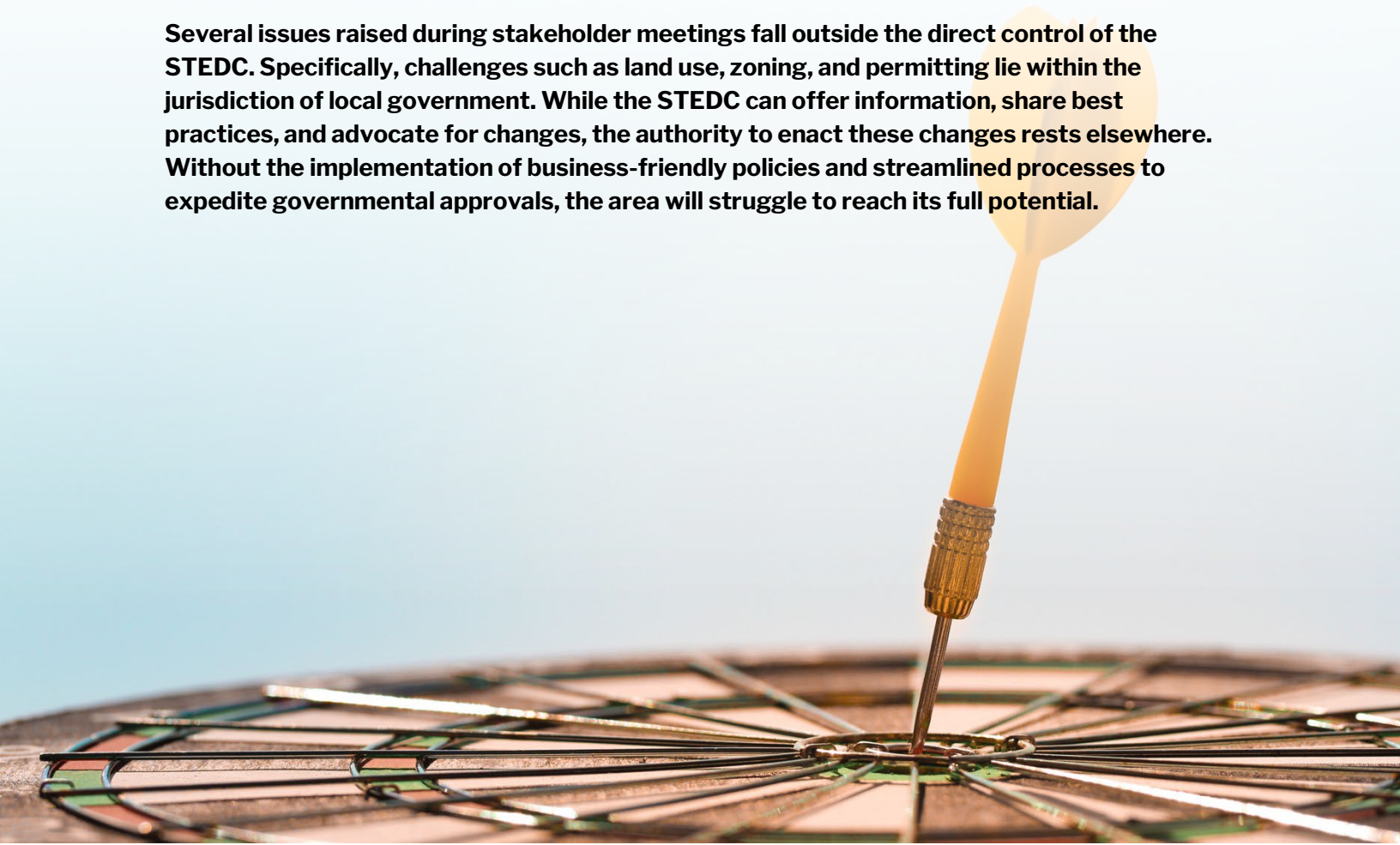
While business recruitment strategies and the partners involved may vary widely from one location to the next, the main tenets of any recruitment approach remain the same. States, regions, and communities must know their products, those products must be relentlessly marketed, and STEDC must continue to be prepared to deliver a sales-focused, solutions-oriented, customer-centric approach.

The pandemic combined with the rapid implementation of automation changed how businesses approach site selection. From supply chain to talent evaluation, there is significant uncertainty affecting the deployment of capital. While access to talent and speed to market remain consistent drivers to the process, risk, or perhaps more important, perceived risk of a project location, can often be the measuring stick between competitive locations. In addition, access to information on sites, buildings, products, and assets must be readily available for site consultants and prospective companies. This means more options are being considered and those organizations that are not laser focused will be less competitive.

Therefore, a clearly defined business strategy centered around STEDC's target sectors and subsector industries and assets that align with STEDC's objectives is critical to win competitive project locations or expand and retain industries already within the region.

Although forecasting does not consider the activities of STEDC, it is also important to consider market trends over the past several years. Construction of facilities and associated costs have grown exponentially into billions of dollars with the deployment of rapid technological advancements. However, the implementation of automation has decreased the number of jobs associated with these types of projects.

**Several issues raised during stakeholder meetings fall outside the direct control of the STEDC. Specifically, challenges such as land use, zoning, and permitting lie within the jurisdiction of local government. While the STEDC can offer information, share best practices, and advocate for changes, the authority to enact these changes rests elsewhere. Without the implementation of business-friendly policies and streamlined processes to expedite governmental approvals, the area will struggle to reach its full potential.**



## Current Target Industries »

### 01 Supply Chain & Logistics

St. Tammany's proximity to major interstates, railways and the Gulf Coast provides excellent access to both domestic and international markets. The region's transportation infrastructure is crucial not only for local economic activity but also for global trade. Here's a detailed look at each sub-sector within the **Supply Chain & Logistics Industry** and the advantages St. Tammany offers for companies in these areas.

**TRANSPORTATION & LOGISTICS:** The **Transportation Industry** is a critical pillar of the economy in many regions, driving trade, commerce, and the movement of goods and people. St. Tammany's strategic proximity to New Orleans, one of the largest port cities in the United States, along with its strong road and rail infrastructure, makes it an attractive hub for various sub-sectors of transportation, including logistics, warehousing and storage, water transportation, auto transportation, and oil and gas transportation.

**Logistics** involves the management and coordination of the flow of goods from point A to point B, including transportation, warehousing, inventory management, and the overall supply chain process. It is a key function for manufacturers, retailers, and distribution companies that need to efficiently move products to customers or between distribution points.

#### KEY BENEFITS IN ST. TAMMANY

- **Strategic Location:** St. Tammany's proximity to **New Orleans** provides easy access to the **Port of New Orleans**, one of the largest and busiest deep-water ports in the U.S. This allows logistics companies to seamlessly integrate maritime transport into their supply chain domestically and globally.
- **Interstate Connectivity:** The region is well-connected by major interstates like **I-10, I-12, and I-59**, providing direct access to key distribution hubs in the U.S., including the Southeast, Southwest, and Midwest.
- **Rail Connections:** Freight rail services in the region enhance St. Tammany's position as a transportation and logistics hub for rail-based shipping.
- **Growing E-commerce Demand:** The surge in e-commerce has driven growth in logistics services, including last-mile delivery, fulfillment centers and distribution networks, all of which benefit from St. Tammany's transportation infrastructure.
- **Examples of Existing Industry:** Zen Noh Grain Corporation

**WAREHOUSING, STORAGE AND DISTRIBUTION:** Warehousing and distribution services involve the storage of goods, inventory management, and the process of distributing goods to retailers or end consumers. This sub-sector is integral to many industries, including manufacturing, retail, and e-commerce.

#### KEY BENEFITS IN ST. TAMMANY

- **Proximity to Key Markets:** With its location near **New Orleans** and the Gulf Coast, St. Tammany provides companies with quick access to large regional and national markets.

Supply chain facilities in the region can serve as key distribution points for goods moving across the U.S. or globally.

- **Infrastructure for Logistics:** The availability of large, modern warehouse facilities in St. Tammany allows businesses to store and manage goods efficiently, with easy access to major highways and rail lines.
- **Affordable Land & Real Estate:** St. Tammany offers relatively affordable land and real estate options compared to larger metropolitan areas, making it an attractive choice for companies looking to expand or establish distribution centers.
- **Tax Incentives & Business-Friendly Environment:** St. Tammany provides several tax incentives and business-friendly policies to support companies involved in distribution operations.
- **Examples of Existing Industry:** Rooms To Go, Smucker's, Diversified Food and Seasonings, Agile Cold Storage

**WATER TRANSPORTATION:** Water transportation involves the movement of goods via maritime vessels, including cargo ships, tankers, and barges. The Port of New Orleans, combined with St. Tammany's access to the Gulf, makes this a critical component of the regional economy, particularly for bulk goods, container shipping, and oil and gas products.

### KEY BENEFITS IN ST. TAMMANY

- **Proximity to the Port of New Orleans:** St. Tammany benefits from its proximity to the **Port of New Orleans**, a major trade hub for global shipping. This port serves as a key gateway for waterborne trade in the Gulf, handling millions of tons of cargo annually.
- **Access to the Mississippi River:** The **Mississippi River** is one of the world's busiest waterways, providing a crucial transportation route for industries reliant on bulk shipping. Companies in St. Tammany can leverage nearby river transport to reduce logistics costs, improve supply chain efficiency and access national and international markets for bulk goods, agricultural products, and industrial shipments. This strategic advantage strengthens the region's role in trade and commerce, making it an attractive location for businesses requiring efficient freight movement.
- **Access to the Gulf:** St. Tammany's coastal location provides maritime access to international shipping routes, enhancing the region's role in the global supply chain. The Gulf Coast is a key trade route for goods moving between the U.S., Latin America, and Europe.
- **Barge Transportation:** The Mississippi River and its tributaries support a robust barge transportation network, providing an affordable and efficient way to move bulk commodities such as coal, grain, chemicals, and other raw materials.
- **Examples of Existing Industry:** Horsburgh & Scott, Weeks Marine, Florida Marine Transporters

**AUTO TRANSPORTATION:** Auto transportation involves the shipment of vehicles from manufacturers, ports, or distribution centers to dealerships or consumers. This sub-sector includes vehicle shipping by truck, rail, or ocean transport.

#### KEY BENEFITS IN ST. TAMMANY

- **Proximity to Major Ports:** St. Tammany's access to the **Port of New Orleans** offers auto manufacturers and dealerships convenient shipping routes for both import and export of vehicles, especially from markets in the Americas, Europe, and Asia.
- **Major Highway Connections:** The region's proximity to **Interstate 10, Interstate 12, and Interstate 59** provides efficient ground transport routes for vehicles traveling from the port or manufacturing facilities to dealerships and consumers across the U.S.
- **Growing Vehicle Logistics Network:** As the demand for vehicle imports and exports increases, St. Tammany's transportation infrastructure supports a growing network of companies involved in vehicle logistics, including vehicle carriers, storage facilities, and regional distribution networks.
- **Examples of Existing Industry:** Textron Marine and Land Systems

**OIL AND GAS TRANSPORTATION:** Oil and gas transportation includes the movement of crude oil, natural gas, refined petroleum products and chemicals via pipelines, tankers, rail, and trucks. The Gulf Coast region is a global leader in oil and gas exploration, production, and transportation.

#### KEY BENEFITS IN ST. TAMMANY

- **Proximity to Energy Hubs:** St. Tammany is located near the **Louisiana Energy Corridor**, a critical hub for oil and gas production, refining and distribution. This proximity allows transportation companies to support the energy sector with efficient logistics and delivery services.
- **Pipeline Infrastructure:** The region benefits from a robust network of oil and gas pipelines that extend throughout the Gulf Coast, including pipelines connecting to refineries, storage terminals and distribution points. St. Tammany plays a role in the regional oil and gas supply chain, ensuring timely delivery and access to energy resources.
- **Access to Maritime Transport:** The **Port of New Orleans** and the Gulf provide key maritime access for the transportation of bulk petroleum products, particularly through oil tankers and barges.
- **Rail & Road Connectivity:** Rail and trucking networks in St. Tammany provide efficient transportation options for moving oil, natural gas, and refined products across the region and to other U.S. markets.
- **Examples of Existing Industry:** Chevron

St. Tammany is strategically positioned to capitalize on the growth and diversification of the **Supply Chain, Logistics, and Transportation Industry**, thanks to its proximity to major infrastructure, including highways, railroads, and maritime routes, as well as its access to global trade hubs like the **Port of New Orleans**. The region is a key player in a wide range of



transportation sub-sectors, from **logistics** and **warehousing** to **water transportation, auto logistics** and **oil and gas transportation**.

This infrastructure, coupled with a business-friendly environment and skilled workforce, positions St. Tammany as an ideal location for companies involved in the transportation industry. As trade, energy demand and e-commerce continue to drive the need for efficient transportation solutions, St. Tammany will remain an essential hub for businesses looking to capitalize on its connectivity and strategic advantages.

## 02 Professional & Business Services

The **Professional & Business Services** sector encompasses a wide range of high-value industries that provide specialized services to support the operations of other businesses and organizations. This sector is critical to the economic growth and development of regions, as it includes industries that require a skilled workforce, sophisticated infrastructure, and often cater to both local and global markets. In the context of St. Tammany, these industries represent key growth opportunities, given the region's strategic location, favorable statewide and regional business climate, and access to a highly educated and diverse talent pool.

St. Tammany's focus on **Professional & Business Services** includes several primary sub-sectors: **Headquarters, Financial Services, Shared Solutions & Services, Accounting and Financial Services, Advertising & Public Relations**, and **Customer Relations & Contact Centers**. Each of these sectors plays an important role in driving economic development, job creation and attracting investment.

**HEADQUARTERS:** Companies establishing regional or national headquarters are often drawn to areas with strong infrastructure, access to talent, business-friendly environments, and strategic locations. St. Tammany offers a competitive cost of living and proximity to major metropolitan areas like New Orleans, making it an ideal location for headquarters operations.

### KEY BENEFITS IN ST. TAMMANY

- **Strategic Location:** Proximity to New Orleans, one of the largest metropolitan areas in the Gulf South, provides businesses with access to global markets and logistics hubs (e.g., the Port of New Orleans, international airports).
- **Business-Friendly Environment:** St. Tammany offers competitive tax incentives, competitive real estate cost, and access to a skilled workforce.
- **Quality of Life:** The region's combination of natural beauty, cultural vibrancy, and access to urban amenities makes it an attractive place for executives and employees to live and work.
- **Networking Opportunities:** Being near a metropolitan area provides networking opportunities with local governments, businesses and industry associations that can support business growth.
- **Examples of Existing Industry:** Microchip ID Systems, POOLCORP

**FINANCIAL SERVICES:** The financial services industry includes banks, insurance companies, accounting firms, investment firms and other entities that offer financial products, services and advice to businesses and individuals. St. Tammany is strategically positioned to capitalize on the growing demand for financial services, especially with the nearby New Orleans market acting as a hub for finance and banking in the Gulf Coast region.

### KEY BENEFITS IN ST. TAMMANY

- **Proximity to New Orleans:** Widely recognized as Louisiana's financial hub, New Orleans provides financial institutions with access to a dynamic banking, insurance, and investment community. The city is home to major financial entities, while organizations like the World

Trade Center of New Orleans play a crucial role in promoting international business and trade, further enhancing the city's financial landscape.

- **Skilled Labor Pool:** St. Tammany benefits from nearby universities with finance and accounting programs that help supply a skilled workforce to the financial services industry.
- **Cost of Doing Business:** Lower operational costs and tax incentives make St. Tammany an attractive location for financial services companies looking to reduce overhead while maintaining proximity to the financial industry's core.
- **Growing FinTech Opportunities:** The rise of financial technology (FinTech) solutions creates new opportunities for startups and established firms in St. Tammany to develop and deploy innovative financial products.
- **Examples of Existing Industry:** Netchex, Wegmann Dazet, LaPorte CPAs and Business Advisors

**SHARED SOLUTIONS & SERVICES:** Shared services centers (SSCs) provide centralized business services such as HR, information technology, finance, procurement and customer service for multiple departments or organizations. St. Tammany's lower operational costs, access to skilled workers and proximity to major cities make it an ideal location for shared services operations.

#### KEY BENEFITS IN ST. TAMMANY

- **Cost Efficiency:** The ability to centralize multiple functions in a single location reduces overhead costs. St. Tammany offers affordable office space and access to an efficient labor pool.
- **Proximity to Talent:** The region's universities and technical colleges provide a steady stream of graduates in fields like software development, business administration and human resources.
- **Infrastructure and Connectivity:** St. Tammany benefits from strong telecommunications and IT infrastructure, critical for the operation of shared services centers, along with excellent transportation links to New Orleans and beyond.
- **Scalability:** Shared services can scale efficiently in St. Tammany due to the availability of space and resources, making it an ideal location for firms seeking flexibility in their operations.
- **Examples of Existing Industry:** Gilsbar, Globalstar, LOOP, LLC

**ADVERTISING & PUBLIC RELATIONS:** The advertising and public relations (PR) industry involves creating marketing campaigns, managing brand reputation, and communicating with various stakeholders to shape public perception. This sector is often driven by creativity and talent and St. Tammany's growing arts and media community, coupled with its proximity to New Orleans, offers an ideal environment for advertising and PR firms to flourish.

#### KEY BENEFITS IN ST. TAMMANY

- **Creative Talent:** The region has a growing pool of creative professionals skilled in marketing, branding, design, and media strategy, thanks to nearby universities and the expanding media industry in New Orleans.
- **Access to Major Media Markets:** New Orleans is a major media market, providing PR and advertising firms with connections to television, radio, print and digital media outlets that can amplify their campaigns.
- **Quality of Life:** St. Tammany offers a vibrant arts and culture scene, providing creative professionals with an attractive environment to live and work.
- **Affordable Operations:** Compared to larger metropolitan areas like New Orleans, St. Tammany offers lower operating costs for businesses in the creative industries, including office space, talent acquisition and living expenses.
- **Examples of Existing Industry:** POLA Marketing, 30/90 Marketing, Velocity Agency, People Who Think

**CUSTOMER RELATIONS & CONTACT CENTERS:** Customer relations and contact centers include businesses that handle customer inquiries, provide technical support, and manage customer service operations for other companies. These centers are essential for businesses seeking to enhance customer experience and offer 24/7 support. St. Tammany's location, talent pool, and cost advantages make it an attractive choice for establishing customer contact centers.

Additionally, this sector presents an opportunity for career pathway development in hospitality and tourism, leveraging transferable skills from legacy industries into emerging sectors. Customer service expertise gained in hospitality can seamlessly transition into roles within contact centers, supporting workforce mobility and economic diversification.

### KEY BENEFITS IN ST. TAMMANY

- **Skilled Workforce:** The region has a well-educated workforce with strong communication and customer service skills, particularly in call center operations, retail, and hospitality.
- **Lower Costs:** Lower entry level wages and operational costs compared to larger metro areas make St. Tammany a cost-effective location for customer service and call center operations.
- **Proximity to Large Markets:** Being near New Orleans, a hub for regional business, allows contact centers to serve a large customer base in Louisiana and across the Gulf South.
- **Infrastructure & Connectivity:** Excellent telecommunications and internet infrastructure ensures that customer service operations can be run efficiently, with access to high-speed data and reliable networks.
- **Examples of Existing Industry:** St. Tammany Health System Patient Experience Department

### 03 Scientific & Technical Services

The **Scientific & Technical Services** industry is a broad sector that includes a variety of high-tech, innovative services that drive research, development, and technical advancements. It is central to many modern industries, supporting everything from healthcare and engineering to environmental science and information technology. St. Tammany, with its proximity to **New Orleans**, a growing regional tech ecosystem and its expanding infrastructure, is well-positioned to capitalize on the growth of this industry.

Key subsectors within **Scientific & Technical Services** include **scientific services**, **technology services**, **research and development (R&D)**, and **company management and consulting services**. Each of these subsectors contributes to the region's knowledge economy and offers substantial opportunities for growth, innovation, and investment.

**SCIENTIFIC SERVICES:** Scientific services encompass a wide range of activities related to conducting **scientific research, analysis, and testing**. This includes work in fields such as environmental science, life sciences, pharmaceuticals, and engineering. Companies providing scientific services often support industries such as healthcare, manufacturing, energy, and agriculture.

#### KEY BENEFITS IN ST. TAMMANY

- **Proximity to Research Hubs:** St. Tammany is home to the **Tulane Primate Research Center** and located near **New Orleans**, which has a well-established healthcare and life sciences industry, including institutions like the **Tulane School of Medicine**, **LSU Health Sciences Center**, and **Xavier University of Louisiana College of Pharmacy**. This gives companies in scientific services access to cutting-edge research and medical innovations.
- **Environmental Research:** The region's rich natural resources and proximity to the **Louisiana coast** make it an attractive location for environmental sciences and research related to water management, ecology, and climate change. This opens opportunities for scientific services focused on environmental studies, conservation, and natural resource management.
- **Skilled Workforce:** St. Tammany's growing population of highly educated residents, many of whom have advanced degrees in science and engineering, provides a strong labor pool for companies in the scientific services sector.
- **Examples of Existing Industry:** Tulane Primate Research Center, Ampirical, C-Innovation

**TECHNOLOGY SERVICES:** Technology services refer to the application, management, and support of technology systems, including software development, IT infrastructure, cybersecurity, cloud computing, and data management. The tech services sector is essential for businesses looking to innovate, improve operational efficiency, or expand their digital capabilities.

#### KEY BENEFITS IN ST. TAMMANY

- **Tech Ecosystem:** While New Orleans itself is emerging as a tech hub, St. Tammany benefits from its proximity to the city, providing a supportive environment for technology startups

and established tech firms. Companies in areas such as **software development**, **cybersecurity**, **data analytics**, and **cloud services** can thrive in the region.

- **Business-Friendly Environment:** St. Tammany offers tax incentives and affordable operating costs compared to larger metropolitan areas, making it an attractive location for tech companies. The region's support for entrepreneurs and small businesses provides a conducive environment for new tech ventures.
- **Growing Talent Pool:** With local universities and technical colleges offering programs in computer science, engineering, and IT, St. Tammany is home to a growing talent pool in the technology sector. This talent pipeline makes it easier for tech firms to recruit skilled workers in a range of technical fields.
- **High-Speed Internet & Connectivity:** St. Tammany benefits from strong internet and telecommunications infrastructure, ensuring that tech businesses have reliable access to high-speed internet and communication networks critical for modern technology services.
- **Access to NASA Facilities:** St. Tammany Parish is strategically positioned near NASA's Stennis Space Center and Michoud Assembly Facility, two major hubs for aerospace, engineering, and advanced manufacturing. These facilities provide opportunities for collaboration, research partnerships and contracts in areas such as aerospace technology, cybersecurity, and high-tech manufacturing, further strengthening the region's innovative ecosystem.
- **Examples of Existing Industry:** CDIT, Antares Technology Solutions, Ener Systems

**RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT (R&D):** Research and development (R&D) involves the creation of new products, technologies, and processes through scientific and technical investigation. R&D is at the heart of innovation in industries such as pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, energy, materials science, and manufacturing.

### KEY BENEFITS IN ST. TAMMANY

- **Proximity to Innovation Hubs:** St. Tammany benefits from its proximity to both New Orleans and Baton Rouge, as well as nearby research universities. **Tulane University** and **LSU's** research institutions provide collaborative opportunities for companies engaged in R&D, particularly in areas like biotechnology, healthcare, and energy. Additionally, **Southeastern Louisiana University** and the **Turtle Cove Environmental Research Station** contribute to research and workforce development, particularly in environmental science, coastal restoration, and ecological sustainability, further enhancing the region's innovation ecosystem.
- **Life Sciences & Biotechnology Focus:** The region's growing emphasis on healthcare and life sciences provides an attractive environment for medical and biotech R&D companies. The **Tulane Primate Research Center** and the **Ochsner MD Anderson Cancer Center** are both located in Covington St. Tammany's proximity to the **Gulf Coast** also opens opportunities for environmental and marine R&D.
- **Innovation Ecosystem:** St. Tammany offers an environment conducive to collaboration and innovation, with access to both private industry and academic research. This ecosystem is



ideal for startups and established companies alike to conduct cutting-edge research and bring new ideas to market.

- **Tax Incentives:** Louisiana's tax incentives for R&D, such as the **Louisiana Digital Media Tax Credit** and the **Research and Development Tax Credit**, offer financial support for companies engaged in R&D activities in St. Tammany.
- **Examples of Existing Industry:** Petnet Solutions, Laborde Products

**COMPANY MANAGEMENT AND CONSULTING SERVICES:** These subsectors provide expert advice and management services to businesses, including strategic consulting, financial advisory, marketing, operations management, human resources consulting and organizational development. Consulting firms help organizations improve performance, optimize operations, and implement best practices.

### KEY BENEFITS IN ST. TAMMANY

- **Growing Business Community:** St. Tammany has a diverse and expanding business community, which creates demand for professional consulting services. Companies across industries such as healthcare, finance, manufacturing, and energy often require expert advice on strategy, efficiency, and market expansion.
- **Access to Industry Expertise:** St. Tammany benefits from the expertise available in the Greater New Orleans region, where many large consulting firms and specialized management consultants operate. St. Tammany companies can leverage this regional expertise while operating in a more affordable and business-friendly environment.
- **Talent Pool for Consulting:** The region has a strong talent pool in business management, finance, and specialized fields such as marketing, human resources, and technology, making it a prime location for firms that require highly skilled consultants. Additionally, this talent base supports the entrepreneurial ecosystem, providing expertise and resources for startups and small businesses looking to scale, innovate and navigate complex business challenges.
- **Business-Friendly Environment:** STEDC provides support to entrepreneurs and small businesses, making it easier for consulting firms to grow in the region. Tax incentives, along with access to a growing market of local businesses, make St. Tammany an attractive location for consulting firms looking to establish themselves or expand.
- **Examples of Existing Industry:** Fairway Consulting and Engineering, Duplantis Design Group, Pelican Energy Consultants

The **Scientific & Technical Services** industry is an important driver of innovation, economic development, and job creation in St. Tammany. The region's proximity to **New Orleans**, a growing talent pool, strong academic institutions and a favorable business climate make it an attractive location for companies involved in **scientific services, technology services, research and development** and **company management and consulting**.

As industries continue to evolve with new technologies, the demand for advanced scientific and technical services will continue to grow, providing opportunities for businesses in St. Tammany

to thrive. Whether it's the booming tech sector, life sciences R&D, or specialized consulting services, St. Tammany's infrastructure, access to talent and favorable business environment create an ideal setting for companies looking to innovate and expand in these dynamic industries.

## Additional Exploration Targets »

### 04 Medical & Equipment Manufacturing

The **Medical & Equipment Device Manufacturing** industry is a vital segment of the healthcare sector that involves the production of medical devices, diagnostic equipment, and therapeutic technologies. These devices range from basic tools like bandages and syringes to complex machinery such as imaging systems, surgical instruments, and implantable devices. The medical device industry is rapidly growing due to the increasing demand for healthcare services, advances in technology and the aging global population. St. Tammany, with its proximity to **New Orleans** and the **broader Gulf Coast region**, offers a favorable environment for medical device manufacturing companies, thanks to its strategic location, access to skilled talent and supportive business ecosystem.

#### KEY SUB-SECTORS WITHIN MEDICAL & EQUIPMENT DEVICE MANUFACTURING

- **Medical Devices Manufacturing:** This involves the design and production of devices used in medical procedures, diagnostics, and therapeutic applications. Examples include surgical instruments, diagnostic machines, prosthetics, and implants.
- **Diagnostic Equipment Manufacturing:** This sub-sector focuses on the production of machines and devices used for detecting diseases and medical conditions, such as imaging systems (MRI, CT scanners, ultrasound), laboratory testing equipment and diagnostic monitors.
- **Therapeutic Equipment Manufacturing:** Companies in this sub-sector manufacture devices used in the treatment or management of medical conditions. These include infusion pumps, dialysis machines, respiratory devices (ventilators) and prosthetics.
- **Orthopedic and Surgical Equipment Manufacturing:** Focuses on the design and production of devices used in surgery and orthopedic care, including joint implants, bone plates, surgical instruments, and spinal devices.
- **Dental Equipment Manufacturing:** Companies in this category produce dental tools, equipment, and instruments, including dental chairs, X-ray machines and dental implants.

#### KEY BENEFITS IN ST. TAMMANY

- **Proximity to Healthcare and Medical Research Hubs:** St. Tammany benefits from its proximity to **New Orleans**, a major hub for healthcare services and medical research. New Orleans is home to leading institutions like **Tulane University School of Medicine**, **LSU Health Sciences Center**, **Xavier University of Louisiana College of Pharmacy**, **LCMC** and **Ochsner Health System**, all of which contribute to advancements in medical technology and provide research and collaboration opportunities for device manufacturers. The presence of these institutions also creates a growing talent pool of medical professionals, engineers and scientists who are highly skilled in medical technology and device development.
- **Access to a Skilled Workforce:** St. Tammany has a well-educated workforce, with nearby universities and technical colleges offering programs in fields like biomedical engineering,

life sciences and manufacturing. This provides medical device manufacturers with a steady supply of talent in engineering, regulatory compliance, quality control and product development. The region also offers specialized training programs that align with the needs of the medical device manufacturing sector, ensuring companies have access to a trained workforce capable of meeting high standards in medical device production.

- **Strategic Location for Manufacturing and Distribution:** St. Tammany's location along **Interstate 12**, **Interstate 10**, and **Interstate 59** provides excellent access to domestic and international markets. With its proximity to the **Port of New Orleans**, companies in St. Tammany can easily ship products to global markets. The Port is one of the largest and busiest in the U.S., providing a key logistical advantage for manufacturers in the region. St. Tammany is also well-positioned for **transportation** and **supply chain management**, with access to highways, rail, and the Mississippi River, which is a key route for the transportation of bulk materials, products, and components.
- **Healthcare Industry Growth and Aging Population:** As the global population ages and demand for healthcare services increases, the need for advanced medical devices is expected to rise significantly. St. Tammany is well-positioned to capitalize on these trends with its growing healthcare infrastructure and access to regional medical markets. The expansion of telemedicine, remote patient monitoring and personalized medicine also increases the demand for innovative medical devices that can support these trends.

## CHALLENGES IN ST. TAMMANY

- **Regulatory Compliance:** The medical device industry is heavily regulated, with stringent standards enforced by agencies like the **U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)** and international bodies such as the **European Medicines Agency (EMA)**. Compliance with these regulations, including product testing, certification, and ongoing post-market surveillance, can be resource-intensive and costly. However, St. Tammany's proximity to New Orleans' medical research community and regulatory professionals can provide valuable support in navigating these complex regulatory environments.
- **Research and Development Costs:** Developing new medical devices and technologies requires significant investment in research and development (R&D), including prototyping, clinical trials, and technology testing. For smaller or new companies, the costs associated with R&D and bringing a device to market can be a major barrier. St. Tammany offers a growing innovation ecosystem with access to research institutions and collaboration opportunities that can help mitigate some of these costs and accelerate the development of new products.
- **Supply Chain and Component Sourcing:** The medical device manufacturing sector depends on a reliable supply chain for components, raw materials, and specialized parts. While St. Tammany's location offers strong logistical advantages, companies must ensure that their supply chains are robust enough to handle the complex requirements of medical device production. The region's proximity to the Port of New Orleans, combined with access to interstate highways, can help manufacturers ensure timely access to materials and components from both domestic and international suppliers.

St. Tammany offers significant advantages for **medical and equipment device manufacturing** due to its strategic location, access to skilled labor and proximity to healthcare and research institutions. The region's transportation infrastructure, including its access to the **Port of New Orleans** and major highways, supports the efficient movement of goods, making it an ideal location for manufacturing and distribution. Additionally, the supportive business environment, including tax incentives and workforce development programs, provides further opportunities for growth and innovation.

With the ongoing expansion of the healthcare sector and the existing three-parish healthcare sector strategy initiative, Northshore Healthscape, facilitated and coordinated by STEDC, advancements in medical technology and the growing demand for medical devices driven by an aging population, St. Tammany is well-positioned to become a key hub for the medical device manufacturing industry. Companies in this sector can leverage the region's strengths in infrastructure, talent, and innovation to drive long-term success in an increasingly competitive global market.

## 05 Agribusiness

Agribusiness is a broad sector that encompasses the production, processing, and distribution of agricultural products. It spans the entire supply chain, from farming and food production to the processing and distribution of agricultural goods. In recent years, **agribusiness** has evolved significantly, integrating advanced technologies such as **vertical farming**, precision agriculture and sustainable practices to meet the growing demand for food, especially in urban environments.

In St. Tammany, agribusiness benefits from the region's fertile land, favorable climate, and proximity to key transportation routes. The industry in the region includes traditional agriculture (such as forestry, equestrian, equine breeding, and livestock production) as well as **emerging technologies** like **vertical farming**, which have gained attention for its ability to grow food in controlled, indoor environments, often in urban areas where space is limited.

### KEY COMPONENTS OF AGRIBUSINESS

#### TRADITIONAL AGRICULTURE

- **Crop Production:** St. Tammany's agricultural sector is focused on crop farming, with key crops including **vegetables, fruits** and **crops like grains, beans**, according to the USDA Census of Agriculture. These crops are cultivated in the region's fertile soil and benefit from the temperate climate of Louisiana.
- **Livestock Farming:** The region also supports livestock farming, with **poultry, cattle** and **swine** being the primary types of livestock raised in the area.
- **Commercial Equine Breeding:** St. Tammany Parish has a storied history of equine breeding farms producing thoroughbred and quarter horse national champions.
- **Aquaculture:** Given Louisiana's proximity to the Gulf, aquaculture, particularly **shrimp farming** and **fish farming**, is an important component of the state's agribusiness sector.

#### AGROPROCESSING

- **Food and Beverage Processing:** Once crops are harvested and livestock raised, the next step in the agribusiness supply chain is the processing of raw agricultural products into consumer goods. This includes everything from **canning** and **freezing** to **milling** grains, **brewing** and **dairy processing**.
- **Bio-based Products:** Agribusiness also includes the production of bio-based products such as **biofuels, bioplastics** and **bio-based chemicals** derived from crops like corn, soybeans, and sugarcane.

#### AGRICULTURAL EQUIPMENT AND INPUTS

- This includes the manufacturing and distribution of **agricultural machinery** (tractors, harvesters, etc.), **seeds, fertilizers, pesticides**, and other inputs needed for efficient crop and livestock production.

#### SUSTAINABILITY AND INNOVATION IN AGRICULTURE

- Modern agribusiness is increasingly focused on **sustainable farming practices**, including water conservation, soil health management, integrated pest management and reduced



chemical usage. The sector is also integrating **technology** for precision farming, data-driven decision-making, and resource management.

## LOUISIANA'S "ALL OF THE ABOVE" ENERGY STRATEGY

- St. Tammany's strengths are a nice compliment to the state's inclusive energy strategy and the GNO region's H2TheFuture campaign. Whether it be to support component manufacturing such as EV batteries and those associated with wind and solar or to provide feed stock to biofuel operations in other parts of the state and country, St. Tammany is poised to be a major player in the alternative energy sector.

## VERTICAL FARMING: A NEW FRONTIER IN AGRIBUSINESS

**Vertical farming** refers to the practice of growing crops in stacked layers or vertically inclined surfaces, often inside controlled environments like **greenhouses** or **indoor farms**. This method of farming is gaining attention due to its ability to produce high yields in a relatively small footprint, making it ideal for urban areas or regions with limited available land for traditional agriculture. Vertical farming can utilize **hydroponics**, **aeroponics**, or **aquaponics** to grow crops with minimal water usage and no soil.

## ADVANTAGES OF VERTICAL FARMING

- **Space Efficiency:** Vertical farming allows for **high-density crop production** in small spaces, including **urban environments** or areas where traditional farming is not feasible. This enables agricultural production within cities or close to urban centers, reducing the need for long-distance transportation and promoting local food systems.
- **Water Conservation:** Traditional farming can require significant water resources, often leading to the depletion of local water supplies. Vertical farming, on the other hand, uses **hydroponic** and **aeroponic** systems, which consume far less water than traditional soil-based farming methods. Water used in vertical farming systems is typically recirculated, significantly reducing water waste.
- **Reduced Transportation Costs and Carbon Footprint:** Vertical farms can be established near urban centers, reducing the need for transporting fresh produce over long distances. This helps to lower transportation costs, decrease food spoilage and reduce the carbon footprint of the food supply chain.
- **Year-Round Production:** Indoor vertical farming systems can be operated year-round, regardless of external weather conditions. This consistent, controlled environment enables growers to produce crops continuously, providing a reliable supply of fresh produce throughout the year.
- **Reduced Pesticide Use:** Vertical farms typically use fewer, or no pesticides compared to traditional farming methods, as the controlled environment makes it easier to manage pests and diseases without resorting to chemical interventions. This results in healthier produce and less environmental impact.
- **Urban and Local Food Security:** Vertical farming plays a key role in enhancing food security in urban areas, where access to fresh, local produce may be limited. By growing food within

city limits, vertical farming helps create more resilient local food systems, improving access to fresh food and reducing reliance on external food supplies.

### KEY BENEFITS IN ST. TAMMANY

- **Proximity to Key Markets:** St. Tammany's location provides access to both local and regional markets, including **New Orleans**, which is a major economic hub. The region's access to transportation infrastructure (including **Interstate 10**, **Interstate 12**, and **Interstate 59**) facilitates the efficient distribution of agribusiness products across the Southeast U.S. and beyond. **Vertical farming** in St. Tammany could benefit from this logistical advantage, offering a way to grow fresh produce for nearby urban areas such as New Orleans, reducing transportation time and costs.
- **Growing Demand for Sustainable, Local Food:** As consumer demand for sustainable, locally grown, and organic food continues to rise, St. Tammany can leverage vertical farming to meet this demand. Consumers are increasingly interested in the environmental benefits of local food production and are willing to pay a premium for products grown with reduced environmental impact.
- **Favorable Climate and Agriculture Expertise:** St. Tammany's **climate** supports a variety of traditional agricultural products, such as **vegetables**, **fruits**, and **crops**, while the growing expertise in agricultural sciences at local universities and technical programs creates a fertile environment for both traditional and innovative agricultural practices, including **vertical farming**. The region also benefits from its proximity to Louisiana State University and its agricultural extension programs, which can provide valuable resources, research, and expertise to agribusinesses in St. Tammany.
- **Access to Funding and Business Support:** Vertical farming initiatives could also attract investment from tech and agri-tech venture funds focused on innovation in food production, sustainability, and resource-efficient agriculture.
- **Innovation and Collaboration:** St. Tammany has the potential to advance agricultural innovation, including **vertical farming**, as demand for alternative, sustainable agricultural practices increase. Partnerships with local research institutions, tech startups and farmers could drive innovation and the adoption of new agricultural technologies.

### CHALLENGES IN ST. TAMMANY

- **High Initial Capital Investment for Vertical Farming:** While vertical farming has many advantages, it also requires a significant upfront investment in infrastructure, including specialized equipment, indoor growing systems, and technology. However, as the industry grows and technology advances, these costs may decrease, making it more accessible for startups and entrepreneurs.
- **Regulatory and Zoning Issues:** Depending on the location, zoning laws and local regulations may impact the establishment of vertical farms in certain areas. For vertical farming to thrive in St. Tammany, stakeholders may need to collaborate with local governments to ensure that zoning laws support the development of high-tech agricultural facilities.

Agribusiness, including the growing field of **vertical farming**, presents significant opportunities for St. Tammany. The region's favorable climate, access to transportation, skilled workforce and proximity to key markets make it an ideal location for both traditional agricultural practices and innovative farming technologies. Vertical farming offers a sustainable solution to meet the growing demand for local, fresh produce in urban areas while minimizing environmental impact.

As the agribusiness sector in St. Tammany continues to evolve, vertical farming could play an increasingly important role in creating more resilient, sustainable food systems in the region and beyond, positioning St. Tammany as a leader in the future of agriculture.

## Competitive Strategies //

**Competitive strategies** are the foundation of STEDC's mission, focusing on economic growth and community development. As STEDC builds on the achievements of the past five years, it will continue to enhance its "Delta Team" – the small group of economic development and community leaders that are included in a specific site visit – ensuring that each member has a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The following strategies are integral to STEDC's future success:

### 01 Advocacy, Marketing and Communications

Maintaining a sustainable organization that fosters community confidence is essential for long-term success. While STEDC has made significant progress, continued efforts are needed to constantly educate the public on the importance of economic development and STEDC's role, especially in managing growth through effective land use planning and strategic industry recruitment.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Continuous Engagement:** Continue implementing an ongoing communication plan with stakeholders regarding STEDC activities, goals, and objectives. This should include leveraging social media, newsletters, and direct engagement with local organizations to address concerns and promote transparency.
- **Informational Outreach:** Continue to develop engaging materials that provide a comprehensive overview of the parish's tax base, detailing the contributions of residential, agricultural, commercial, and industrial properties. Explain how the composition of the tax base influences overall tax rates and share insights on parish debt per citizen to highlight the benefits of a diversified and sustainable economic foundation.
- **Marketing Strategy Development:** Continue to craft and polish a business attraction and marketing strategy that aligns with updated targeted industries. This strategy should demonstrate that industrial development can coexist with community aesthetics, dispelling myths about industrial facilities being inherently unattractive or detrimental to property values.

**CROSS-CUTTING RECOMMENDATION: "So what" Element Creation.** Including a "So What?" element in marketing materials is a critical concept in economic development because it ensures messaging is not only informative but also compelling, relevant, and actionable for your audience. When crafting marketing content for economic development, whether it's for an industrial site, a new business park, or a regional investment opportunity, it's vital to make the connection between the facts you present and the tangible benefits to the audience. The "So What?" is the element that answers why this information matters to them, motivating them to take the next step – whether it's investing, relocating, or expanding operations.

Here's why having a "So What?" element is essential for economic development marketing:

### Clarifies the Value Proposition

- **What it Means:** Economic development marketing often involves showcasing data, facts and figures—like infrastructure, tax incentives, workforce quality and logistical advantages. The "So What?" answers the question: *Why should a business care about this?*
- **Why It Matters:** Businesses and investors are making decisions based on how these factors will benefit them. If you don't explicitly make that connection, your content may appear dry or irrelevant. For example, "Proximity to major highways" could sound like a standard fact, but the "So What?" might be: *This reduces transportation costs and provides faster distribution channels, helping you save time and money on logistics.*

### Helps Cut Through the Noise

- **What it Means:** In a crowded marketplace, economic development professionals are competing for the attention of investors, developers, and businesses. Every region, city, or county is touting its advantages. "So What?" is the element that helps your message stand out.
- **Why It Matters:** By directly addressing why your information matters and what action it will prompt, you ensure your content resonates with the audience. If your marketing materials focus solely on data without contextualizing it, you're not addressing the *real* concerns and needs of the audience. The "So What?" helps differentiate your message from others.

### Moves Potential Investors Toward Action

- **What it Means:** The goal of economic development marketing is not just to inform, but to convert interest into action—whether that's getting a business to explore an industrial site, contact a local economic development agency, or initiate a site visit.
- **Why It Matters:** The "So What?" acts as the bridge between information and action. It tells the audience what to do next and why it benefits them. For instance, "Access to skilled labor" is a nice point, but the "So What?" might be "This means you'll have a ready workforce to start operations faster, cutting down your hiring and training costs." Including the "So What?" encourages potential investors or businesses to act, such as reaching out for a consultation or scheduling a site tour.

### Speaks to the Audience's Needs and Goals

- **What it Means:** In economic development marketing, the focus must always be on the audience—whether it's site selectors, business executives, or developers. It's essential to tailor messaging to address their specific goals and pain points.
- **Why It Matters:** Your audience wants to know: *How will this benefit me and my business?* Without addressing this, your content risks sounding like generic information. For example, listing "excellent tax incentives" is useful, but the "So What?" should explain: "This means significant cost savings for your business, which can be reinvested in growth and innovation."

### Connects the Dots Between Features and Benefits

- **What it Means:** Economic development marketing materials often list features (e.g., available land, tax incentives, workforce demographics), but the "So What?" connects these features directly to the *benefits* that matter to businesses.
- **Why It Matters:** By focusing on outcomes rather than just features, you're making the case for how those features will directly improve a company's bottom line. For example, "Access to highways" is a feature, but the "So What?" is: *"This makes your operations more efficient and cost-effective by reducing transportation costs and time to market."* The "So What?" clearly demonstrates how your region or development will make a business's operations more successful.

### Improves Engagement with the Audience

- **What it Means:** Simply presenting facts without a compelling narrative doesn't keep the audience engaged. The "So What?" helps frame your message in a way that taps into the emotional and rational motivations of your target audience.
- **Why It Matters:** People make decisions based on both logic and emotion. For example, when you say, *"The region has 1,000 available acres of industrial land"*, the "So What?" could be: *"This means ample room for your expansion plans with minimal competition for space, ensuring you can grow your business without the hassle of overcrowding."* The "So What?" brings your audience's potential vision to life, engaging them in the future possibilities your region can offer.

### Supports Clear and Direct Communication

- **What it Means:** Economic development content can sometimes be dense, filled with facts, statistics, and data points. The "So What?" distills that information into a digestible, compelling point that keeps the audience's attention focused on the most important elements.
- **Why It Matters:** Without the "So What?", long lists of features may become overwhelming or confusing. Instead of a dry list of features, the "So What?" ensures you are leading the audience through the data to the most important takeaway. This makes the content easier to understand, retain and act upon.

## EXAMPLES OF THE "SO WHAT?" IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MARKETING

### Proximity to Major Highways

- **Feature:** "The site is located within 5 miles of I-10, I-12 and I-59."
- **So What?** *"This prime location will reduce your shipping and transportation costs, while giving you direct access to regional, national and international markets, saving time and money on logistics."*

### Skilled Workforce

- **Feature:** "The Northshore five-parish region has a strong workforce, nearly 20,000 employees in manufacturing and logistics."



- **So What?** *“A highly skilled workforce will help you fill key positions quickly and efficiently, reducing your hiring and training time. You won’t have to worry about labor shortages, which means you can scale your operations seamlessly.”*

### **Tax Incentives and Financing Programs**

- **Feature:** "Our region offers up to 10 years of project incentives or business support programs for new manufacturing businesses."
- **So What?** *“This incentive will help you save thousands in operating costs annually, allowing you to reinvest those savings into expansion, innovation, or employee benefits. It’s a financial boost to get your business up and running with minimal overhead.”*

### **Available Land and Infrastructure**

- **Feature:** "There are over (number of acres) of land zoned for industrial use."
- **So What?** *“With plenty of space for expansion, you won’t have to worry about outgrowing your location. Plus, the existing infrastructure supports quick development, so you can start operations sooner and focus on business growth.”*

The "So What?" is the critical bridge between basic information and the compelling value of the region, development project, or site offers to businesses. Without it, the messaging risks being flat, uninspiring, or irrelevant to the audience. By consistently answering the "So What?" in your economic development marketing materials, STEDC ensures that the messaging speaks directly to the needs of the audience and drives the desired action, whether that’s encouraging site visits, attracting investment, or persuading businesses to relocate or expand.

## 02A Targeted Industry Recruitment

Recruiting new industries and business investment remains a central expectation for STEDC. The targeted industries identified in this strategic plan have been refined based on stakeholder feedback, desktop research, market trends and will continue to adapt as land use and zoning decisions evolve.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Participation in Site Selector Events:** Continue to attend national and regional site selector events, as well as target industry specific events, to promote St. Tammany as a viable option for new industries while remaining up to date on industry trends.
- **Information Compilation:** Gather and organize all pertinent information related to sites and infrastructure to facilitate rapid and professional responses to Requests for Information (RFIs) from prospective companies or site selectors.

## 02B Gulf South Commerce Park Microsite Enhancements

An industrial site microsite for economic development marketing is a focused, niche website that promotes specific industrial sites, business parks, or development zones to potential investors, companies, or businesses looking to expand or relocate. The purpose of such a microsite is to highlight the unique features and advantages of a particular location to attract commercial investment and business development.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Microsite:** Enhance the Gulf South Commerce Park microsite to highlight the unique features and advantages of a particular location to attract commercial investment and business development.
- **Digital Marketing Package:** Develop a comprehensive digital package for the Gulf South Commerce Park site that can be shared with site selectors after initial meetings. The package should showcase the site's advantages and available resources. This package should extend the information available on the microsite and be organized in a shared folder (e.g., Dropbox, ShareFile). It should include key documents such as engineering and zoning maps, Phase I Environmental Site Assessments, and other relevant materials.

### Showcasing Key Site Features and Advantages

- **Purpose:** The microsite can showcase the features of the industrial site such as location, infrastructure (e.g., transportation access, utilities), zoning, size, and customizable options for businesses.
- **Benefit:** Clear presentation of site benefits (proximity to major highways, ports, airports, etc.) makes it easier for businesses to assess the site's potential, increasing the likelihood of site visits, or further inquiries.

### User-Friendly, Rich Visual Content

- **Purpose:** Visual tools like interactive maps, aerial views, 3D renderings, virtual tours, and high-quality images can give prospective tenants or investors a better understanding of the industrial site.
- **Benefit:** Visual experience can help potential clients better imagine their business operations within the site, building more confidence in the site's potential.

### Detailed Data and Site Information

- **Purpose:** Provide essential information such as land availability, square footage, environmental considerations, tax incentives, workforce availability, and utility services.
- **Benefit:** By having all relevant, up-to-date information in one place, businesses can quickly assess the site's suitability, saving time in their decision-making process. This can be crucial for making informed, efficient investments.

### Enhancing Economic Development Efforts

- **Purpose:** Economic development organizations (EDOs), local governments, or real estate developers can use the microsite to promote the local economic advantages such as workforce quality, business incentives, and available infrastructure.
- **Benefit:** It strengthens the region's ability to compete in the market by presenting a cohesive, organized approach that emphasizes the region's strengths, thus attracting investment and fostering job creation.

### Integration with Broader Marketing Strategies

- **Purpose:** The microsite can act as a complementary tool within a larger economic development marketing campaign, tying into search engine optimization (SEO) efforts, digital advertising, trade shows, or direct outreach to real estate brokers or developers.
- **Benefit:** It enables EDOs to enhance the visibility of the industrial site and track user interactions for future engagement and follow-ups. This leads to more data-driven decisions and continuous improvement of marketing strategies.

### Lead Generation and Contact Management

- **Purpose:** Microsites can include forms or calls-to-action (CTAs) that allow potential clients to reach out for more information or schedule a site visit.
- **Benefit:** A well-integrated lead capture system helps convert interest into tangible prospects, making the sales process more streamlined and efficient.

### Cost-Effective and Measurable Impact

- **Purpose:** Creating and maintaining a microsite is often more cost-effective than traditional advertising, especially for targeting a global audience.
- **Benefit:** With built-in analytics, organizations can track how many visitors are coming to the site, where they're coming from, what information they're engaging with and how many leads are generated, allowing for ongoing optimization and ROI measurement.

### Competitive Advantage

- **Purpose:** In competitive markets, industrial sites that are promoted with professional, accessible, and engaging online content have an edge over sites that lack an online presence or clear marketing materials.
- **Benefit:** By providing potential investors with all the information they need in one place, the microsite can make a strong impression, helping the site stand out in a competitive real estate or industrial development market.

### **Regional Branding and Promotion**

- **Purpose:** The microsite can also reinforce the brand identity of the region or local government, positioning it as a business-friendly location for investment and expansion.
- **Benefit:** This contributes to building the region's reputation as a prime location for industrial growth and helps increase overall business attraction in the long term

**Best Practice:** Rankin County, MS's [East Metropolitan Center microsite](#)

**Best Practice:** Falls City, NE EDGE – [North Commercial Corridor microsite](#)

### 03 Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E)

Recognizing that the best opportunities for capital investment and job creation often lie within existing industries, STEDC should continue prioritizing the cultivation of strong relationships with local businesses. Strengthening this proactive approach will help STEDC better understand both current and future challenges these industries face, while identifying opportunities for growth.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Quarterly Industry Meetings:** Continue quarterly meetings with local industries to discuss their current challenges and collaboratively identify potential solutions. These sessions can also include discussions on wage and benefit trends that might affect local businesses.
- **BR&E Visitation Program:** Enhance the BR&E program where STEDC staff meet with plant managers and HR professionals to discuss opportunities, challenges, and workforce needs. This initiative aims to foster relationships that facilitate open communication about assistance that may be required.
- **Headquarters Visits:** Consider visiting the headquarters of key existing industries to strengthen relationships and gather insights into their operations and future needs.

**CROSS-CUTTING RECOMMENDATION: A BR&E Visitation Program focused on market intelligence** is a strategy designed to strengthen relationships with existing businesses while gathering valuable data to drive economic development efforts. Market intelligence in this context refers to understanding local and regional business environments, trends, challenges, opportunities, and needs.

#### Program Design

- **Target Industries:** Identify priority sectors (e.g., advanced manufacturing, tech, retail, healthcare) and focus on businesses in these areas to understand their specific needs.
- **Outreach Plan:** Develop a schedule for regular visits, targeting both high-impact businesses and those facing challenges. Prioritize businesses in industries or sectors with the highest potential for growth.

#### Data Collection Tools

- **Surveys and questionnaires:** Customize these to ask about market conditions, competition, workforce challenges and investment plans.
- **Interviews:** Conduct in-depth interviews to gather qualitative insights into the broader business environment.

**Program Timing:** Conduct visits regularly (e.g., quarterly or annually) to maintain consistent feedback loops. Schedule visits during key business milestones, such as annual planning cycles, product launches, or major expansions.

#### Key Components of the Visitation Process

**Pre-Visit Preparation:** Study the business's industry, market conditions and competitors before the visit. Understand the company's history, size, number of employees, products or services and major challenges.

**Visit Structure:** The visit should be conversational, focusing on understanding:

- Business challenges and barriers to growth (e.g., regulatory issues, workforce shortages, supply chain disruptions).
- Opportunities for business expansion or innovation.
- Market trends affecting the industry (e.g., consumer preferences, technology adoption).
- Needs for resources such as training, talent development, or financing.

**Data Capture:** During visits, use a consistent method of capturing data (e.g., interview notes, digital surveys, recording systems).

### **Market Intelligence Gathering**

- Business Performance Indicators: Collect data on business sales, production volumes, employment levels and export activity.
- Competitor Insights: Understand competitive pressures within the local, national, and global markets, including competitive advantages or weaknesses.
- Supply Chain and Workforce Trends: Gather data on any challenges companies face with supply chains, sourcing materials, or finding qualified workers.
- Innovation and R&D: Identify where businesses are innovating, investing in new technologies, or entering new markets.
- Regulatory and Policy Impact: Ask businesses how local, state, or federal regulations are affecting them and what changes could help them grow.
- External Market Factors: Collect information on broader market conditions that may affect local businesses (e.g., inflation rates, international trade policies, consumer demand shifts).

### **Data Analysis and Reporting**

- Analyze Patterns: Look for common trends across industries, such as workforce shortages, capital investment needs, or market expansion opportunities.
- Identify Sector Strengths and Weaknesses: Determine which sectors are thriving, which are struggling, and which have unmet needs.
- Benchmarking: Compare local businesses' performance with regional or national averages to assess competitiveness and growth potential.
- Feedback Loops: Summarize key findings and communicate them back to businesses, as well as to local government and economic development stakeholders. This helps businesses feel heard and demonstrates the value of the program.

### **Actionable Outcomes and Strategy Implementation**

**Strategic Planning:** Use the data gathered to inform local economic development strategies, including:

- Workforce Development: If businesses report skill shortages, partner with educational institutions or workforce training programs to address those gaps.
- Infrastructure Investment: If businesses cite transportation or internet access as a barrier, advocate for improvements in those areas.
- Incentives and Resources: Identify whether businesses need additional funding, tax incentives, or grants to expand and create jobs.



- **Networking and Partnerships:** Foster connections between local businesses, chambers of commerce, industry associations, or universities to enhance collaboration and innovation.

**Policy Advocacy:** Leverage insights from the BR&E visits to advocate for local, state, and federal policies that support business growth.

**Targeted Programs:** Develop initiatives such as export assistance, business incubators, or innovation hubs, based on the needs identified during visits.

### **Engagement and Follow-Up**

- **Ongoing Communication:** Stay connected with visited businesses to show continued support and track the progress of their growth plans or challenges.
- **Regular Feedback Mechanisms:** Conduct follow-up surveys or check-ins to track changes and update the database with new market intelligence.
- **Celebrate Success:** Publicize success stories and highlight businesses that are growing or expanding due to the support they receive through the BR&E program.

### **Metrics for Success**

- **Retention Rate:** Track how many businesses remain in the community and continue to expand after program engagement.
- **Growth Indicators:** Monitor changes in employment, production output, or new investment in businesses that participated in the program.
- **Economic Impact:** Measure the broader economic impact of the BR&E program on local GDP, tax revenue and employment.
- **Satisfaction and Engagement:** Assess business satisfaction with the program through surveys and interviews, ensuring the program is responsive to their needs.

### **Technology and Tools for Program Management**

- **CRM Software:** Use Customer Relationship Management tools to manage company profiles, visit schedules and track interactions.
- **Survey Platforms:** Implement tools like SurveyMonkey or Qualtrics for data collection and analysis.
- **Data Visualization Tools:** Leverage platforms like Tableau or Power BI to visualize trends and insights for stakeholders.
- **GIS Mapping:** Use Geographic Information Systems to map out key industry clusters, infrastructure needs and development zones.

By structuring the BR&E program with a clear market intelligence focus, STEDC can gain valuable insights to improve business environments, identify opportunities for growth and foster deeper connections between businesses and the community. This data-driven approach not only supports business retention and expansion efforts but also informs long-term economic development strategies.

**Best Practice:** The [Greater Phoenix Economic Council \(GPEC\)](#) in Phoenix, Arizona, runs a robust BR&E program focused on retaining and growing local businesses. The program gathers market intelligence on industry challenges and workforce needs, particularly in sectors like advanced manufacturing, healthcare, and technology. GPEC uses this data to identify expansion opportunities, connect businesses with resources and incentives, and inform

decisions on workforce training and infrastructure investments. By strengthening relationships with local businesses, GPEC helps ensure their growth and supports new investment in the region.

**Best Practice:** The [Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning \(CMAP\)](#) runs a BR&E program to help local businesses expand by providing market intelligence. The program collaborates with chambers of commerce and municipalities to gather data on growth opportunities, workforce needs and challenges, particularly in manufacturing, technology, and logistics. CMAP uses this information to identify expansion opportunities, connect businesses with resources and inform regional policies and infrastructure planning. By taking a regional approach, CMAP ensures resources are effectively allocated to support business growth across the greater Chicago area.

## 04 Clear and Efficient Zoning, Permitting and Development Processes

Feedback indicates a need for more clarity and consistency in local process, specifically regarding the existing lengthy zoning and permitting processes at the parish and municipal levels. While balancing confidentiality with transparency can be challenging, STEDC should explore ways to share more general information about projects with selected partners without revealing sensitive details about potential projects.

Additionally, actions such as expedited zoning, permitting, and licensing, were frequently mentioned. Several comments highlighted the excessive amount of time that land-use and permitting decisions can take. For many projects, delays or uncertainty translate to increased risk, and these delays can result in potential projects being redirected to other sites. To mitigate these challenges, it may be helpful to look into best practices from neighboring counties in Mississippi to identify strategies for expediting these processes.

### Recommendations:

- **Policy Development:** Work closely with parish leadership to create land-use, permitting and licensing policies that ensure timely approvals for projects meeting specific pre-defined criteria. This will reduce uncertainty for prospective industries and provide confidence that decisions will be made according to existing parish policy. A good policy should clarify the full process for approval, including:
  - **Clear Approval Process:** Outline each step in the approval process, including reviews, potential appeals, public meetings, required approvals and associated timelines.
  - **Pre-Defined Criteria:** Specify the criteria that projects must meet to ensure timely approvals, reducing uncertainty for prospective industries.
  - **Identification Points:** Indicate at what stage in the process the company needs to be identified.
  - **Required Information:** Provide a detailed list of all required information and documentation that must be submitted.
  - **Application Forms:** Include copies of all applications and forms needed for each type of request.
  - **Public Involvement:** Detail how and when the public can be involved in the process, ensuring community input is considered.
  - **Approval Timeline:** Provide a specific length of time each step will not exceed so that a “worst case scenario” is understood by the potential project.
  - **Established and Confirmed Processes:** Establish process charts or flow charts to easily identify and track the necessary processes and steps required for development.
  - **Consider Having a Project Ombudsman:** This role would facilitate the steps of the development process between STEDC and the Parish to ensure efficiency and timeliness of business development efforts.
  - **Third-party Partnerships for Expedited Technical Review:** Where appropriate, engage third-party professional service vendors for technical, engineering, and design review for development related projects.

- **Reporting Transparency:** No recommendation is being made to provide early transparency to the public, or even widespread information to all public officials due to the confidential nature of projects. However, ensuring that the public is well-informed about the costs, benefits, anticipated revenue, capital investment and job creation associated with these projects can indeed help mitigate negative feedback during the recruitment process.

## 05 Site Development

The successful development of Gulf South Commerce Park illustrates the need for ongoing efforts in site development. To sustain this momentum, STEDC must continue collaborating with parish leadership to identify and prepare additional sites poised for business development.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Land Use Strategy:** Advocate for the inclusion of industrial sites in the final land use strategy, ensuring they are appropriately zoned to prevent unintended commercial development.
- **Infrastructure Planning:** For newly identified sites, develop comprehensive infrastructure plans that include cost assessments and strategies for securing state and federal grant funding to support development efforts.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Explore opportunities for additional public-private partnerships that enable companies to recoup costs associated with public infrastructure development, ensuring a reasonable return on investment while alleviating the financial burden on the parish.

Mississippi has recently committed a [\\$110 million investment](#) towards economic development, infrastructure upgrades, workforce development, tourism and conservation efforts throughout across the state, with notable allocations in Pearl River County and Hancock County. These areas are considered direct competitors to St. Tammany Parish, particularly in terms of economic development and business attraction efforts. This strategic investment highlights the growing competition in the broader Gulf Coast region, which could have implications for St. Tammany Parish's economic growth and site development initiatives.

#### Mississippi Site Development Grants:

- **Pearl River County Industrial Park – Pearl River County** – \$1,438,650 to construct a water tank and relocate power lines.
- **Stennis Technology Park – Hancock County** – \$3,000,000 to grub, grade, and construct two building pads, design and construct access roads, extend water and sewer lines, and make drainage improvements.

## Facilitated Strategies //

Certain areas impacting STEDC's success are beyond its direct control. However, STEDC can play an active role in facilitating solutions in these areas.

### 01 Workforce Development

A skilled workforce is essential for attracting and expanding industries in St. Tammany Parish. For the past 8+ years, STEDC has led this effort, demonstrating not only the availability of a strong current workforce but also the development of a robust talent pipeline for the future.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Expanded Workforce Roundtable Engagement:** Continue to expand roundtables comprising workforce training leaders and target industry representatives to candidly discuss current training effectiveness, industry needs and strategies to address unfilled job vacancies.
- **Provide Career Pathway Mapping:** Develop and distribute career maps that outline the skills, training and educational steps needed to pursue a career in high-demand sectors. This can help students visualize both short- and long-term goals. Leverage resources produced by GNO, Inc to ensure students have access to comprehensive and up-to-date career pathway information. Provide clear resources, such as brochures, websites and interactive tools, detailing career opportunities, local industry growth and expected skill sets.

**Best Practice:** A strong example of career pathway mapping is [Denver's Opportunity Youth Initiative](#), launched in 2012 and led by the **Denver Office of Economic Development**. This program creates clear, industry-aligned career pathways for young people by partnering with local businesses, educational institutions, and workforce development organizations. It offers tailored career coaching, work-based learning opportunities like internships and apprenticeships and maps out the necessary educational steps for high-demand fields such as healthcare, technology, and skilled trades. By collaborating with employers to define skill requirements, the initiative ensures that students gain relevant experience and certifications, making them better prepared for local job markets. This approach has proven effective in aligning education with industry needs, improving job placement and reducing skill gaps in the workforce.

- **Enhanced Career Fairs and Industry Panels:** Organize career fairs and networking events where local businesses can interact directly with students. These events could focus on specific industries such as technology, healthcare, or manufacturing. Consider hosting career panels featuring local business leaders and professionals who can share insights into their careers, the skills required and the future of the industry. This initiative, driven by the dynamic efforts of our Workforce Roundtable, has earned recognition from the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) and Business Facilities magazine, underscoring its impact in bridging education and industry to prepare students for real-world career opportunities.



- **Career Counseling and Mentorship:** Partner with industry leaders to provide one-on-one career counseling services and mentorship programs that connect students with professionals in their desired fields. Mentors can guide students through the challenges of early career development.

## 02 Entrepreneurship and Small Business Engagement

Since August 2022, STEDC has led entrepreneurial ecosystem efforts across the three-parish Northshore region through its STartUP Northshore 3-year pilot program. The outcomes of this initiative have been significant, and the intention is for STartUP Northshore to become a foundational economic development program vertical for the EDO moving forward and to advance and broaden the current program of work.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Develop Second Stage Company Programming:** It is imperative to identify the area businesses, through existing programmatic opportunities or business retention efforts, that have the potential to scale at an accelerated rate. The EDO can curate programming, mentorship, accelerators, and technical assistance for the identified companies to overcome challenges, meet evolving needs, and harness innovation.
- **Advance Access to Capital:** Recognizing that access to capital is a barrier that many businesses within the ecosystem encounter during their business life cycles, identify and pursue opportunities that support both capital readiness and direct capital access that fill this need. This may include technical assistance programs, grant initiatives, strategic partnerships, and the development of innovative mechanisms that provide more direct financial support for entrepreneurs within the region.
- **Enhance Small Business Support and Technical Assistance:** While STartUP Northshore has built a strong foundation through programs like IDEAinstitute *Northshore* for high-growth, early-stage startups, we recognize the distinct needs of traditional and Main Street small businesses. Consider expanding offerings to include small business-specific programming, including both cohort-based learning opportunities and individualized coaching and mentorship. The ability to connect directly with small businesses, deliver tailored content to their specific needs, and foster a community of small business leaders will further enhance the ecosystem, identify areas of technical assistance needs, and provide opportunities for collaboration with other small business partners in the region.
- **Commission a Comprehensive Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Strategic Infrastructure Plan:** The entrepreneurial ecosystem on the Northshore, in Greater New Orleans, and in southeast Louisiana continues to evolve and expand. To understand the unique role the Northshore plays in the broader ecosystem and to identify future opportunities, it will be advantageous for the organization to commission a comprehensive entrepreneurial ecosystem strategic infrastructure plan. Core elements to explore include asset, resource, and incentives mapping, research components to understand trends and their evolution over recent years and projections for the near future, and identifying additional support providers, partners, and collaborators.

### 03 Strategic Coalition Building to Strengthen Tourism and Economic Growth

While tourism does not fall directly under STEDC's purview, coalition building and strategic partnerships can play a key role in maximizing its economic impact. STEDC has built a strong reputation as a convener, facilitator, and coalition builder across various sectors, including tourism, chambers of commerce, elected officials, and key stakeholders. By leveraging this role, STEDC can support the St. Tammany Parish Tourist & Convention Commission in efforts that drive job creation and enhance the region's overall quality of life.

Tourism is a critical economic driver for the parish, led by the St. Tammany Parish Tourist & Convention Commission/Visit the Northshore. The Commission works to promote outdoor recreation, cultural events, culinary experiences, and the unique assets of our communities.

As part of **THRIVE2029**, STEDC has an opportunity to build upon its history of coalition building to strategically support and enhance tourism-related initiatives. Through capacity building and harnessing momentum for broad impact, STEDC can help identify, assess, and facilitate the development of complementary tourism products that align with economic growth objectives. This could include the creation of new attractions or enhancements to existing assets, further strengthening the region's tourism economy while reinforcing STEDC's role as a strategic economic development leader.

**Best Practice:** The [Hattiesburg Convention Commission](#) provides a useful model. They have successfully built key infrastructure such as a convention center, a water park at the zoo and the [African American Military History Museum](#). While the Tourism Commission markets the area, the Convention Commission focuses on building the necessary products and infrastructure to support tourism.

## 04 Land Use, Infrastructure Advocacy, and Market Strategies

Given community concerns regarding traditional industrial development, STEDC must facilitate discussions around land use policies that promote best practices and educate citizens about the benefits of designating land for industrial purposes. These efforts will align directly with Louisiana Economic Development's focus on the overall ease of doing business in Louisiana.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Awareness and Education:** STEDC should continue to facilitate educational and awareness initiatives by sharing timely, relevant data on the economic landscape. In addition to their quarterly economic trends reports and other publications produced under the banner of *The AnalyST*, the organization should consider the development and distribution of infographics illustrating the comparative tax contributions of residential versus commercial and industrial properties. Emphasize how increased industrial investment can help stabilize rising property tax rates resulting from a growing residential base.
- **Community Assurance:** Clearly communicate the intent behind targeted industry recruitment, reassuring residents that STEDC seeks to attract industries that align with community values and existing infrastructure capabilities.

Market opportunities encompass external factors influencing perceptions of both STEDC and the St. Tammany community. Enhancing the region's business friendliness and streamlining approval processes are critical to fostering a positive environment for economic development.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Updated Zoning Maps:** Collaborate with parish officials to develop updated zoning maps that facilitate clearer understanding of available industrial zones and establish expedited processes for rezoning non-controversial properties.
- **Permitting Timeline Development:** Establish a permitting timeline that strikes a balance between thorough review and expedited processing to mitigate risks associated with lengthy approval periods. Aiming for a more business-friendly approach can prevent potential projects from being sidelined due to anticipated delays.
- **Local Government Development Processes:** Work with parish leadership to define the approval requirements, advocating for a resolution that ensures compliance-based approvals are granted without unnecessary delays or complications.

By implementing these comprehensive strategies, STEDC can effectively navigate challenges, leverage opportunities, and drive sustainable economic growth in St. Tammany Parish. Through collaboration, clear communication, and a focus on community needs, STEDC will enhance its role as a catalyst for progress in the region.

## Conclusion // Driving Forward with a Purpose

As we look toward the future, STEDC is positioned to expand its sphere of influence and strengthen its impact on economic development. Through the leadership of STEDC, a dedicated board of directors, engaged stakeholders, and elected officials, we are driving forward with a strategy that not only meets the challenges of today but anticipates the market trends of tomorrow.

This plan is not just about vision—it's about execution. It builds on data-driven insights, stakeholder input, and a deep understanding of St. Tammany's evolving economic landscape. However, true success lies in our ability to create opportunities for economic growth. The economic environment will continue to shift, and our approach must remain agile. Strategic flexibility ensures that we don't fall into the trap of analysis paralysis but instead move steadily from planning to action—following the "crawl, walk, run" methodology that drives effective implementation.

Over the next five years, STEDC will push beyond traditional economic development efforts, equipping their team and partners with the foresight and tools needed to stay ahead of industry shifts and position St. Tammany for sustained economic growth. By enhancing our regional influence, proactively engaging with emerging trends, and fostering a business-friendly ecosystem, we will continue building a resilient and thriving parish economy.

## Addendum 1

### Enhancing STEDC's Target Industry Page: Defining Competitive Advantages for Economic Growth

By implementing these enhancements, STEDC's target industry page can become a comprehensive resource that informs stakeholders, attracts investment, and supports local businesses, ultimately contributing to the region's economic development strategy.

Highlighting and defining competitive advantages for industry sectors and subsections on economic development websites is crucial for several reasons:

- **Attracting Investment:** Clear identification of competitive advantages helps attract businesses and investors. When potential investors see a region's strengths—like skilled labor, favorable regulations, or infrastructure—they are more likely to consider it for expansion or relocation.
- **Guiding Policy Decisions:** Understanding competitive advantages can inform government policies and initiatives. Economic development agencies can focus on supporting sectors with the most potential for growth, which can lead to job creation and increased economic activity.
- **Promoting Workforce Development:** By defining competitive advantages, regions can align educational and training programs to meet the needs of specific industries. This ensures a skilled workforce that is prepared for the demands of the local economy.
- **Enhancing Collaboration:** Highlighting competitive advantages fosters collaboration among businesses, educational institutions, and government agencies. It can encourage partnerships that leverage shared strengths to enhance overall economic performance.
- **Informing Existing Industries:** Local businesses can benefit from understanding the competitive landscape. This knowledge can help them identify market opportunities, innovate, and position themselves effectively within their industry.
- **Improving Marketing Efforts:** Economic development websites serve as a marketing tool for a region. Clearly articulated competitive advantages can enhance the attractiveness of a location to prospective businesses and investors.

In summary, emphasizing competitive advantages helps create a clear picture of what makes a St. Tammany Parish and the Northshore region unique and attractive for specific industries, ultimately driving economic growth and development.



## Addendum 2

### Proactive Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) Program

A more proactive BR&E program that also supports market intelligence includes:

#### **Establish Program Objectives**

- **Retention and Expansion:** The primary goal is to ensure the retention and growth of existing businesses in the community.
- **Market Intelligence:** To gather actionable data on the local economy, industry trends, workforce needs and potential barriers to growth.
- **Relationship Building:** Foster strong ties with businesses to understand their challenges and opportunities, facilitating a proactive approach to address issues.
- **Economic Development Planning:** Leverage insights into strategic decision-making, identifying sectors for investment, workforce development, infrastructure improvements, etc.

## Addendum 3:

### Industrial Site Microsite: A Targeted Tool for Economic Development Marketing

Here are the primary purposes and benefits of an industrial site microsite for economic development marketing:

#### Targeted Marketing and Attraction

- **Purpose:** The microsite is designed to target specific industries or businesses that align with the site's offerings. It serves as a focused marketing tool to attract businesses that are looking for industrial space, facilities, or development opportunities in a particular region.

**Benefit:** It ensures that the message reaches the right audience, making the marketing effort more effective and efficient. Companies looking for sites can easily find detailed, relevant information without wading through irrelevant content.

## Addendum 4:

### Enhance Target Industry Webpage

The target industry page is currently difficult to find on the website. To enhance [STEDC's target industry page](#) and make it more effective for economic development strategy, consider the following suggestions for structuring and enriching the content:

#### Industry Overview

- **Definition:** Provide a brief overview of each target industry, explaining its significance and role in the local economy.
- **Key Statistics:** Include relevant data such as market size, growth rates and employment figures to give a quantitative sense of the industry's importance.

#### Competitive Advantages

- **Strengths:** Highlight the competitive advantages specific to each industry in the region, such as:
  - Access to resources (e.g., natural resources, skilled labor)
  - Infrastructure (e.g., transportation networks, logistics capabilities)
  - Supportive regulatory environment
- **Case Studies:** Include examples of successful companies or initiatives within the industry to illustrate these advantages.

#### Market Trends and Opportunities

- **Current Trends:** Discuss emerging trends within each industry, such as technological advancements or changing consumer behaviors.
- **Opportunities for Growth:** Identify potential growth areas, niches, or new markets that local businesses can explore.

#### Workforce Development

- **Skill Requirements:** Outline the skills needed for jobs in the industry and any gaps that exist in the current workforce.
- **Training and Education Programs:** Highlight local educational institutions and training programs that can help develop the necessary skills.

#### Support Resources

- **Local Organizations:** List of industry associations, chambers of commerce and other organizations that support businesses in the sector.
- **Incentives:** Detail any financial incentives, grants, or business support programs available to businesses in the target industries.

#### Networking Collaboration

- **Business Clusters:** Describe any existing business clusters or networks that foster collaboration among companies in the industry.

### Visuals and Infographics

- **Data Visualization:** Use charts, graphs, and infographics to present data clearly and engagingly, making the information more accessible.

### Calls to Action

- **Engagement:** Encourage visitors to contact STEDC for more information, consultation, or support related to the target industries.



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