WHY THE BIG WIN ISN'T ALWAYS THE BIG STORY
DANCE WITH THE ONE THAT BRUNG YA

IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT circles, it’s common knowledge that most economic development and job creation will come from existing companies already in our economy, and not from attracting new companies.

I’m not one to quote country songs, or songs in general, but let’s call this strategy: Dance with the one that brung ya.

At BRAC, this has been a foundational principle since we restarted as a regional economic development group in 2006. We have visited 150 in-market companies a year since 2006, focusing on how they compete, their challenges to growth, and their opportunities for developing new markets. We connect them with resource providers, programs, governmental agencies, and financial tools. We also generate the highest number of new prospective projects by learning their needs and challenges.

We continue to push the envelope. This year, we revamped our efforts with a strategy called Greaux Local (eaux yeah). Once a month, we’re meeting with company executives in small groups to hear their plans, have them share their goals and lessons learned with peers, and get feedback and advice in a group session. We even invite partners like those in higher education to join and listen, often allowing them opportunities to help these local businesses with talent needs and innovation. It’s working.

We’re seeing companies responding with new ideas, new plans, and sharing with each other about ways they can drive their growth. I should note too that growing “existing businesses” is not a strategy focused solely on big business, but also heavily focused on assisting small businesses. I’ve heard a hundred times that BRAC doesn’t focus on small businesses—perhaps a perspective from a long time ago—but it is not the reality today.

Our Small Business and Entrepreneurship Council engages directly to drive an agenda of issues for small business. We launched this year a new Small Business Series to bring interesting, up-to-date business practices and knowledge to our investors.

We employ a dedicated Business Concierge, a staff person who advises businesses on any questions that they bring us, referrals they are seeking, introductions, and those wonderful “who-would-know-this” questions that come out of the blue.

Small business policy is also baked into our legislative agenda to join a strong statewide offense and sturdy defense around legislation that helps, or hurts, small businesses and the competitiveness of our business climate.

We can, and do, grow the regional economy by helping the existing businesses already here in the nine-parish area. Enjoy the issue!

Adam Knapp
President and CEO
Baton Rouge Area Chamber
REGIONAL ECONOMY BY THE NUMBERS:
SMALL BUSINESSES IN BATON ROUGE

WHILE PEOPLE MAY think of large international companies like ExxonMobil or IBM when the topic of Baton Rouge’s economy is mentioned, the vast majority of Capital Region residents are actually employed by small and mid-sized businesses. These companies span every industry, from manufacturing to professional services to leisure and hospitality.

Quite often, small and mid-sized businesses serve as vendors and contractors for large companies, creating a complex and dependent ecosystem between businesses of varying sizes.

According to youreconomy.org, there are about 50,000 businesses in the Capital Region that are either self-employed individuals or operations of two to nine employees. This means that about 80% of regional businesses have nine or fewer employees—and over 99% have fewer than 100 employees. Businesses of 99 or fewer employees account for nine out of 10 Capital Region employers. On the other end of the spectrum, only 50 companies have 500 or more employees.

One major part of this small business success is the growth in startups. From 2017 to 2018, the number of jobs gained from startups doubled from 37,203 to 74,672—accounting for 86% of all jobs gained in 2018.

These numbers, paired with qualitative indicators such as Baton Rouge being chosen for eBay’s Retail Revival program, underscore the strong entrepreneurial environment in the Capital Region. While people may think of large companies, such as those located in downtown Baton Rouge, the driving force of the economy is mentioned, the vast majority of Capital Region residents are actually employed by small and mid-sized businesses. These companies span every industry, from manufacturing to professional services to leisure and hospitality.

Quite often, small and mid-sized businesses serve as vendors and contractors for large companies, creating a complex and dependent ecosystem between businesses of varying sizes.

According to youreconomy.org, there are about 50,000 businesses in the Capital Region that are either self-employed individuals or operations of two to nine employees. This means that about 80% of regional businesses have nine or fewer employees—and over 99% have fewer than 100 employees. Businesses of 99 or fewer employees account for nine out of 10 Capital Region employers. On the other end of the spectrum, only 50 companies have 500 or more employees.

One major part of this small business success is the growth in startups. From 2017 to 2018, the number of jobs gained from startups doubled from 37,203 to 74,672—accounting for 86% of all jobs gained in 2018. These numbers, paired with qualitative indicators such as Baton Rouge being chosen for eBay’s Retail Revival program, underscore the strong entrepreneurial environment in the Capital Region. However, it is important that this environment is maintained and strengthened. In the 2019 state legislative session, a number of proposed bills would have hurt the small business environment across the state. In particular, one bill would have allowed municipalities to set their own minimum wages.

Small businesses in states and municipalities that have instituted significant minimum wage hikes have had to increase prices and lay off staff members to account for the higher wages. Ensuring that the state legal and regulatory environment encourages startups and fosters small business growth is crucial, especially in a place as small-business-heavy as the Capital Region.

Andrew Fitzgerald
Senior Director, Business Intelligence
Fitzgerald focuses on research and analysis for BRAC’s business development and economic competitiveness teams.

THE CAPITAL REGION: OPEN FOR BUSINESS

BRAC’S BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT team works throughout the year to bring new business to the region and help existing companies expand. This year has seen robust activity, with a total of nine project wins to date. These nine projects combined represent a total of 538 new jobs, $26 million in new payroll, and over $778 million in total capital expenditures in the Baton Rouge Area.

Two new projects announced in the second quarter include MCM Plastics, a plastics manufacturing plant in Livingston Parish, and Conn’s HomePlus Regional Distribution Facility in West Baton Rouge. A third, confidential, project will expand its current manufacturing operations in Livingston Parish. The company plans to construct a new facility that will more than double its original footprint. The company is expected to make a public announcement later this fall. MCM Plastics culls plastic residue from high-volume producers and recycles the excess materials for use by its customers. The company has been a corporate citizen in the Holden area for over two decades, and the project will create 70 new direct jobs and 25 new indirect jobs, with an average salary of more than $41,300, plus benefits.

The announcement was made on the heels of Conn’s HomePlus continuing its expansion into Louisiana, opening a second store in Baton Rouge and completing three additional stores in the New Orleans market by the end of this year. Conn’s HomePlus operates 127 retail locations across 14 states.

Chandra Williams
Director, Business Retention and Expansion
Williams directs BRAC’s business retention and expansion program and supports strategic growth initiatives in the Capital Region to enhance the business ecosystem.

The company plans to install new dryers and construct warehouse space that will add over 25,000 square feet to the existing 100,000-square-foot facility. The project will add five new jobs offering an average annual salary of more than $37,000, the capital expenditure is expected to exceed $2.7 million. Conn’s HomePlus Regional Distribution Facility will open a 250,000-square-foot distribution center for multistate logistics. Groundbreaking is expected this summer and the project will create 70 new direct jobs with an average salary of more than $41,300, plus benefits.

The announcement was made on the heels of Conn’s HomePlus continuing its expansion into Louisiana, opening a second store in Baton Rouge and completing three additional stores in the New Orleans market by the end of this year. Conn’s HomePlus operates 127 retail locations across 14 states.

Chandra Williams
Director, Business Retention and Expansion
Williams directs BRAC’s business retention and expansion program and supports strategic growth initiatives in the Capital Region to enhance the business ecosystem.
DIVERSITY
SECOND QUARTER
BATON ROUGE DIVERSITY STARS’ TOP TIPS FOR IMPLEMENTING INCLUSION

Inclusion Committee. BRAC’s Diversity and Ausberry, chair of category from Cheri for the large business Diversity Star Award of Louisiana accepts the Rod Teamer of Blue Shield of Louisiana accepts the Diversity Star Award for the small business category.

TOP TIPS FOR IMPLEMENTING INCLUSION

SPEARHEADED BY BRAC’S DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE

Since 2016, BRAC has promoted a definition and business case for the benefits of diversity and inclusion for the Baton Rouge Area. The organization’s annual Diversity in Business event features national experts that provide insight on key topics and best practices. Last year, BRAC took one more step in promoting best practices by honoring and recognizing regional businesses that have championed diversity and inclusion in their organization and in the community through a Diversity Star Award.

Winners of the 2019 Diversity Star Award were Lighthouse Louisiana and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana, representing small and large businesses, respectively.

Lighthouse Louisiana
Lighthouse Louisiana was selected for its dedication to empowering people with disabilities through services, employment, and advocacy. The organization has been intentional in hiring a diverse workforce—not just in terms of people with disabilities, but also in terms of gender, race, culture, and nationality.

Stephanie Benedetti, vice president of sales and marketing at Lighthouse Louisiana (second from right), accepts the Diversity Star Award for the small business category.

Lighted by the implementation of an organization-wide diversity and inclusion initiative. Within the initiative, D&I training is required of all its employees, including senior leaders and board members. The initiative has also proven effective in building a framework for partnering with businesses owned by women, veterans, and minorities.

BLUE CROSS AND BLUE SHIELD OF LOUISIANA
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana was selected for demonstrated excellence in its diversity and inclusion practices, highlighted by the implementation of an organization-wide diversity and inclusion initiative. Within the initiative, D&I training is required of all its employees, including senior leaders and board members. The initiative has also proven effective in building a framework for partnering with businesses owned by women, veterans, and minorities.

Rod Teamer, director of diversity programs and business development for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana, shared his top tips for businesses building diversity and inclusion practices into their organizations:

1. Develop a business case that clearly communicates why diversity and inclusion is important to the long-term success of your business.
2. Hold your organization’s leaders accountable. The leaders of the organization must be held to the same standards as all other employees. For example, if training is mandatory for all employees, leaders must also participate.
3. Commit to a long-term strategy. Diversity and inclusion done correctly takes a few years to yield results.

For more insight from this year’s Diversity Star Award winners, visit BRAC’s blog at brac.org/blog.

Adam Knapp
President and CEO, BRAC

“THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS, CONVERSATIONS LIKE THESE, AND INTENTIONAL PLANNING, OUR REGION IS BECOMING MORE THOUGHTFUL AND IMPACTFUL AROUND ISSUES OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION.”

“Through partnerships, conversations like these, and intentional planning, our region is becoming more thoughtful and impactful around issues of diversity and inclusion.”

Adam Knapp
President and CEO, BRAC

Morgan Kastner Marketing Manager

Kastner manages writing organizational publications and materials, oversees BRAC’s social media and blog, and coordinates timelines for all internal marketing projects.

“SINCE 2016, BRAC has promoted a definition and business case for the benefits of diversity and inclusion for the Baton Rouge Area. The organization’s annual Diversity in Business event features national experts that provide insight on key topics and best practices. Last year, BRAC took one more step in promoting best practices by honoring and recognizing regional businesses that have championed diversity and inclusion in their organization and in the community through a Diversity Star Award. Spearheaded by BRAC’s Diversity and Inclusion Committee, the award seeks to highlight exceptional best practices taking place at businesses in the Capital Region. Criteria for the award include a demonstrated track record of support for diversity across all levels of an organization, from management and board makeup to company culture. Further support through company procurement practices, vendor and supply chain management, and overall company goals were also evaluated.

Winners of the 2019 Diversity Star Award were Lighthouse Louisiana and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana, representing small and large businesses, respectively.

Lighted by the implementation of an organization-wide diversity and inclusion initiative. Within the initiative, D&I training is required of all its employees, including senior leaders and board members. The initiative has also proven effective in building a framework for partnering with businesses owned by women, veterans, and minorities.

Rod Teamer, director of diversity programs and business development for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana, shared his top tips for businesses building diversity and inclusion practices into their organizations:

1. Develop a business case that clearly communicates why diversity and inclusion is important to the long-term success of your business.
2. Hold your organization’s leaders accountable. The leaders of the organization must be held to the same standards as all other employees. For example, if training is mandatory for all employees, leaders must also participate.
3. Commit to a long-term strategy. Diversity and inclusion done correctly takes a few years to yield results.

For more insight from this year’s Diversity Star Award winners, visit BRAC’s blog at brac.org/blog.

Adam Knapp
President and CEO, BRAC

“THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS, CONVERSATIONS LIKE THESE, AND INTENTIONAL PLANNING, OUR REGION IS BECOMING MORE THOUGHTFUL AND IMPACTFUL AROUND ISSUES OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION.”

Adam Knapp
President and CEO, BRAC

Morgan Kastner Marketing Manager

Kastner manages writing organizational publications and materials, oversees BRAC’s social media and blog, and coordinates timelines for all internal marketing projects.

“SINCE 2016, BRAC has promoted a definition and business case for the benefits of diversity and inclusion for the Baton Rouge Area. The organization’s annual Diversity in Business event features national experts that provide insight on key topics and best practices. Last year, BRAC took one more step in promoting best practices by honoring and recognizing regional businesses that have championed diversity and inclusion in their organization and in the community through a Diversity Star Award. Spearheaded by BRAC’s Diversity and Inclusion Committee, the award seeks to highlight exceptional best practices taking place at businesses in the Capital Region. Criteria for the award include a demonstrated track record of support for diversity across all levels of an organization, from management and board makeup to company culture. Further support through company procurement practices, vendor and supply chain management, and overall company goals were also evaluated.

Winners of the 2019 Diversity Star Award were Lighthouse Louisiana and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana, representing small and large businesses, respectively.

Lighted by the implementation of an organization-wide diversity and inclusion initiative. Within the initiative, D&I training is required of all its employees, including senior leaders and board members. The initiative has also proven effective in building a framework for partnering with businesses owned by women, veterans, and minorities.

Rod Teamer, director of diversity programs and business development for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana, shared his top tips for businesses building diversity and inclusion practices into their organizations:

1. Develop a business case that clearly communicates why diversity and inclusion is important to the long-term success of your business.
2. Hold your organization’s leaders accountable. The leaders of the organization must be held to the same standards as all other employees. For example, if training is mandatory for all employees, leaders must also participate.
3. Commit to a long-term strategy. Diversity and inclusion done correctly takes a few years to yield results.

For more insight from this year’s Diversity Star Award winners, visit BRAC’s blog at brac.org/blog.

Adam Knapp
President and CEO, BRAC

“THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS, CONVERSATIONS LIKE THESE, AND INTENTIONAL PLANNING, OUR REGION IS BECOMING MORE THOUGHTFUL AND IMPACTFUL AROUND ISSUES OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION。”

Adam Knapp
President and CEO, BRAC

Morgan Kastner Marketing Manager

Kastner manages writing organizational publications and materials, oversees BRAC’s social media and blog, and coordinates timelines for all internal marketing projects.

“SINCE 2016, BRAC has promoted a definition and business case for the benefits of diversity and inclusion for the Baton Rouge Area. The organization’s annual Diversity in Business event features national experts that provide insight on key topics and best practices. Last year, BRAC took one more step in promoting best practices by honoring and recognizing regional businesses that have championed diversity and inclusion in their organization and in the community through a Diversity Star Award. Spearheaded by BRAC’s Diversity and Inclusion Committee, the award seeks to highlight exceptional best practices taking place at businesses in the Capital Region. Criteria for the award include a demonstrated track record of support for diversity across all levels of an organization, from management and board makeup to company culture. Further support through company procurement practices, vendor and supply chain management, and overall company goals were also evaluated.

Winners of the 2019 Diversity Star Award were Lighthouse Louisiana and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana, representing small and large businesses, respectively.

Lighted by the implementation of an organization-wide diversity and inclusion initiative. Within the initiative, D&I training is required of all its employees, including senior leaders and board members. The initiative has also proven effective in building a framework for partnering with businesses owned by women, veterans, and minorities.

Rod Teamer, director of diversity programs and business development for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana, shared his top tips for businesses building diversity and inclusion practices into their organizations:

1. Develop a business case that clearly communicates why diversity and inclusion is important to the long-term success of your business.
2. Hold your organization’s leaders accountable. The leaders of the organization must be held to the same standards as all other employees. For example, if training is mandatory for all employees, leaders must also participate.
3. Commit to a long-term strategy. Diversity and inclusion done correctly takes a few years to yield results.

For more insight from this year’s Diversity Star Award winners, visit BRAC’s blog at brac.org/blog.

Adam Knapp
President and CEO, BRAC

“THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS, CONVERSATIONS LIKE THESE, AND INTENTIONAL PLANNING, OUR REGION IS BECOMING MORE THOUGHTFUL AND IMPACTFUL AROUND ISSUES OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION。”

Adam Knapp
President and CEO, BRAC

Morgan Kastner Marketing Manager

Kastner manages writing organizational publications and materials, oversees BRAC’s social media and blog, and coordinates timelines for all internal marketing projects.
WHEN MOST PEOPLE think of economic development, they think of headline-grabbing projects touting million-dollar investments and the potential of hundreds of new jobs. Those types of economic development projects, while exciting and certainly deserving of the attention, aren’t all that typical. And they don’t represent the bulk of what economic development work is and does for a community.

The bread and butter of economic development actually focuses a significant amount of time and effort on businesses that are already in the region—helping existing businesses sustain or grow their operations, and helping entrepreneurs get started. Those projects on their own rarely garner the same amount of attention or public awareness as the “white glove” announcements, but together make a sizable impact on the community. In 2018 BRAC secured 15 projects for the Capital Region. Eight of those projects were expansions of local businesses, meaning that in addition to helping those projects were expansions of local businesses, but together make a sizable impact on the community. In 2018 BRAC secured 15 projects for the Capital Region. Eight of those projects were expansions of local businesses, meaning that in addition to helping those

EXPERT KNOWLEDGE: BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION

If you are a business owner or have ever tried to start a business, you know that it’s not an easy endeavor. From workforce challenges to navigating the regulatory environment, business ownership requires a breadth of knowledge and access to resources that can be overwhelming. BRAC's flagship program related to existing regional businesses is its business retention and expansion (BRE) initiative, aimed at lowering the barriers for business growth and providing a built-in network for referrals to experts in everything from international trade to real estate.

In addition to one-on-one consultations, the BRE program recently launched a new initiative in partnership with the Louisiana Economic Development (LED), to ensure compliance. Preparing and executing an expansion requires oversight on a number of moving parts, and BRAC and its partners stand at the ready to assist businesses in that process. In many cases, BRAC and its partners serve as an extension of the business itself, fully immersed in the process for many months, or even years, before a project is announced publicly.

Business owners are busy people and are often too immersed in their work to research assistance available to them. The BRE program takes the pressure off by serving as a very well-informed middle man. Christy D’Armond, president of Fabrication Services Inc., participated in LED’s CEO Roundtable after referral from BRE, and commented, “One of the most important things I learned is that there is a world of resources available to small businesses—at no cost!”

SMALL BUSINESS PROGRAMMING

Complementing the work of the BRE program, BRAC conducts programming specifically focused on assisting local small business owners. BRAC’s Small Business and Entrepreneurship Council has connected BRAC investors, works to enhance the region’s competitiveness by increasing services to small businesses and communicating important policy issues impacting job creation. The group, over 100 members strong, meets quarterly and drives BRAC’s strategic agenda around small business issues.

Additional small business-focused programming includes the new Small Business Series, held monthly at the David E. Roberts Center for Economic Development. Open to any business owner in the region, the series invites partner agencies such as the Louisiana Workforce Commission, LED, the Louisiana Department of Insurance, the Louisiana Procurement Technical Assistance Center, and others to introduce their resources and services and answer questions.

BUSINESS CONCIERGE

Another key piece to BRAC’s existing business support puzzle is the business concierge, a BRAC staffer who maintains expert knowledge of resources, services, and people to help businesses grow. The business concierge is available to answer questions and facilitate introductions with other BRAC staff, BRAC investors, state and local government offices, and community resources.

Baton Rouge Procurement Opportunity Partnership

Economic growth necessitates strong ties between businesses already operating in a region, and ensuring equity in economic opportunity. In May, BRAC partnered with MetroMorphosis, the East Baton Rouge Public School System’s Fair Share Program, and the Office of Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broussard to launch the Baton Rouge Procurement Opportunity Partnership (BR POP). BR POP is a voluntary program for public entities and private businesses to enhance diversity and inclusion practices in their procurement of goods and services from area vendors. So far, major universities, hospitals, industrial companies, and engineering firms have signed up to participate, with more on the way.

The program is designed to assist the development and growth of Baton Rouge veteran-, women-, and minority-owned small businesses. Supporting BR POP is an intensive suite of services offered by launch partners: MetroMorphosis’ initiative to help small businesses be better prepared to compete for and fulfill contracts.

Collaboration, intentional programming, and building authentic relationships are foundational pillars of BRAC’s approach to economic development. When the end game is growing jobs and wealth so that every member of the Capital Region has the opportunity for economic stability, sometimes it’s important to remember that you have to support small to grow big.

Russell Richardson
Senior Vice President, Business Development
Richardson works with economic development professionals and the business community to lead and manage economic development efforts in the Capital Region.

Stakeholders gather for the announcement of the Baton Rouge Procurement Opportunity Partnership.
GOAL 1 GROW AND DIVERSIFY THE BATON ROUGE AREA ECONOMY
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
BRAC continues to maintain a robust project pipeline through the second quarter of 2019. Currently, there are 49 active projects totaling a potential 7,913 jobs, $435 million in total payroll and $13.2 billion in capital expenditures across the nine-parish region. For the first half of 2019, BRAC has secured 538 new jobs, $26 million in new payroll, and $778 million in capital expenditure.

GOAL 2 CULTIVATE THE REGION’S TALENT EXPAND STEM LEARNING AND PARTNERSHIPS
This summer, 31 school principals, assistant principals, counselors, and career coaches from seven of the Capital Region’s school districts were selected for the fifth cohort of BRAC’s Pathways to Prosperity Fellowship. The fellows spent a week with Baton Rouge Area companies in the high-wage, high-demand industries of manufacturing, healthcare, IT, and construction/skilled craft. While on site, they learned about careers available to students, as well as the skills and knowledge needed to obtain a job in these industries.

ALIGN REGIONAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT WITH BUSINESS NEEDS
BRAC has continued its support of the East Baton Rouge Career and Technical Education Center (CTEC) by partnering with the school on a grant to fund a pre-apprenticeship program for CTEC’s students. The $40,000 grant, provided by the Louisiana Workforce Commission’s Office of Apprenticeships, will allow 15 students to “learn and earn” over the summer, working for companies within their respective areas of study including healthcare, construction, IT, and automotive repair.

RECRUIT AND RETAIN TOP TALENT
To assist area employers in familiarizing candidates and/or new employees with the Capital Region, BRAC conducts individual and group tours of the region. At press time, BRAC had completed one group and 24 individual tours for prospective candidates, including tours for Community Coffee, Ochsner, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana, Lamar Advertising, Baton Rouge Clinic, and Knock Knock Children’s Museum. BRAC’s Pathways to Prosperity Fellowship brought together 31 school principals, counselors and career coaches to learn more about high-wage, high-demand industries in the community.

In June BRAC announced a new award, the Capital Region Employee Health Innovation Award, sponsored by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana, to recognize companies in the community that have implemented and promoted innovative practices that led to healthier and more productive companies in the region.

#BRACfact
In June, BRAC’s Pathways to Prosperity Fellowship brought together 31 school principals, counselors and career coaches to learn more about high-wage, high-demand industries in the community.
Building an Ecosystem of Opportunity.

IMPROVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY SCHOOL CHOICES FOR ALL FAMILIES IN THE BATON ROUGE AREA

East Baton Rouge School Board expanded its portfolio of public school options in May with the approval of four high-quality charter schools supported by BRAC: BASIS, Mentorship Academy, Community School for Apprenticeship Learning (CSAL), and KIPP. BASIS, Mentorship, and CSAL are already operating schools in East Baton Rouge, while KIPP is newly entering the market. Mentorship and CSAL are locally-started charter schools that are expanding their grades; Mentorship, a STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math) high school in downtown Baton Rouge will add grades K-6, and CSAL, which operates a middle school and one of the highest performing open-enrollment high schools in the parish, will expand to serve elementary students.

BRAC, which opened a K-12 school in partnership with Woman’s Hospital in August of 2018, was approved for a second K-12 school—good news for the 600 or so families on the school’s waiting list. Finally, KIPP was approved to open three schools.

ADVOCATE FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL QUALITY OF PLACE INITIATIVES

BRAC staff, through the Quality of Place Committee, successfully advocated for HB 446, new Act 384, authored by Rep. Paula Davis. The legislation removes prohibitive risks behind purchasing property at tax sale by defining how a tax collecting entity should search for individuals/entities with an interest in the property in order to serve them notice.

Supported by a broad statewide coalition including the Louisiana Sheriff’s Association, Louisiana Municipal Association, LABI and others, the legislation encourages the redevelopment of blighted properties throughout the state and seeks to end the accumulation of adjudicated properties among parish governments.

In April, BRAC’s director of talent development completed the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives’ Fellowship for Education and Talent Development. The program concluded with the creation of a regional action plan entitled InterBRAC: Building an Ecosystem of Opportunity.

GOAL 3

TRANSFORM THE BATON ROUGE AREA’S QUALITY OF LIFE

Despite business groups, including BRAC, ONO, Inc., LABI, LCA, and others, coming together in support of the proposed increased gas tax, the legislation failed to go through the legislature this session.

Nonetheless the flag was raised to call for a special session in 2020 focused solely on transportation solutions. As we head into election season, which starts with qualifying in August, it will become more and more vital that the business community continue the call for both reform and real solutions to solve our transportation crisis.

Read more about outcomes from session in BRAC’s Advocacy Update on page 14.

GOAL 4

ELEVATE THE REGION’S EXTERNAL IMAGE

Through a partnership with the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, Visit Baton Rouge, and the Baton Rouge Metropolitan Airport, BRAC engages in a sustained media relations strategy to positively position the Baton Rouge Area in national publications.

In May, representatives with BRAC, the Water Institute of the Gulf, Baton Rouge Area Foundation, and the Office of Mayor-Orson President Shawntarae Weston Broom traveled to New York City for a series of meetings with press outlets, including a live broadcast with Mayor Broom on MSNBC (see image below).

In addition, the partnership hosted several journalists for the Baton Rouge Blues Festival, resulting in placements in Food & Wine, USA Today, the Austin Chronicle spotlighting the region’s vibrant culture and quality of life.

In BRAC’s Quality of Place Committee continues to monitor the progress of the City-Parish’s recent external Efficiency Report, created by Managing Partners, for opportunities to improve maintenance practices by the public works departments.

While there is much work to be done, initial findings of the report and their subsequent implementation have been applauded by the Quality of Place Commit-tee as increasing accountability among the City-Parish’s public works departments while also shifting towards proactive, scheduled maintenance work throughout East Baton Rouge.

CHAMPION SWIFT TRANSPORTATION AND TRAFFIC SOLUTIONS

There have been some key developments in addressing the region’s transportation needs in the second quarter of 2019, mainly due to a handful of legislative actions and the work of the Capital Area Road and Bridge District (CARBID).

HB 578 by Rep. Tanner Maggese presented a key transportation infrastructure win for the Capital Region, as it provides $125 million for construction of the LA 415 Bridge at the Intracoastal Canal. The law dedicates the economic proceeds from the Deepwater Horizon litigation to listed transportation projects and, importantly, redirects funding to the Construction Subfund of the Transportation Trust Fund. This influx of funding will directly impact the most congested traffic of the West side of the Capital Region.

CARBID has been meeting regularly, and through intensive legislative activity received dedicated statewide funding of $5 million to be used for the planning of a new Mississippi River Bridge and connectors in the Capital Region.

Executive Investor
Annual Investment of $100,000+

Capital One Bank • Cox Communications • Cumulus Media • Entergy • Exzel Group • Exzentro • Guaranty Media • Louisiana State University System • Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center • WGBH

Board Investor
Annual Investment of $50,000+

Adams & Bruce Law Firm • The Advocate • The Baton Rouge Clinic, AMC • Baton Rouge Coca-Cola Bottling Company • Baton Rouge General Medical Center • Bernhard Capital Partners Management, LP • Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana • Breazeale, Sachse & Wilson, LLP • Cornestone Government Affairs • CBIS, Inc. • DECODO • Dow Chemical Company • Economics Development Partnership Fund • Georgia Pacific • Herrick Whitney Bank • HeartMedia • Jones Walker, LLP • JPMorgan Chase • Karen Miller LLP • The Lamar Corporation • LUSA Workers’ Comp • Management Media/WBHZ • Ouachita Health Center Baton Rouge / Ouachita Medical Center Baton Rouge • Philips Distributing Co. L.L.P. • The Powell Group • Regions Bank • Taylor, Porter, Brooks & Phillips, L.L.P. • Turner Industries Group • WABP

Development Investor
Annual Investment of $25,000+

Albemarle Corporation • BASF Global • Baton Rouge Water Company • Boykin Brothers • Broadsword Properties, LLC • Capital Area Finance Authority • Coastal Bridge Co. • Forte and Tablada, Inc. • Gallagher • General Informatics • Greater Baton Rouge Area Real Estate’s • Greater Baton Rouge Business Report • BERMANCO • Islehkraine Casino & Hotel Baton Rouge • Louisiana - Mediterranean Company • MappLAI • MAPP Construction • Mesh Design, LLC • NAL Luter & Blum • NIRG Energy • Performance Contractors • Providence • Segpont • Integrated Solutions • Southern Steel Fabricators • SSA Consultants • S jump Corporation

R&D Investor
Annual Investment of $15,000+

Ammo Energy • ASB Insurance • Clear Blue Design • Community Coffee Company • Fagley Communications • Land Oil Company • Manda Pine Mills • Milton J. Womack, Inc. • Orion Instruments • RJ Daige & Sons • Barnstorm Life Insurance • Women’s Hospital

Policy Investor
Annual Investment of $10,000+

Art Source • Art Liques • Large Industries U.S. • Amedoyo, Inc. • A. Wilbert’s Sons • Belle of Baton Rouge Casino • Business First Bank • Exploits Design Group • Frank & Wilson, LLC, C.M. • GMPS Mortgage • Harris, T. Bourgeois, LLP • Hollingsworth Richards Automotive Group • Hollywood Casino • LaRue OPPE & Business Advisors • Lion Construction • Loton Staffing Services • Lysle Specialty Company • McGinley Stafford • Neighborhood Federal Credit Union • The Newton Group • PoolsideAwake & Neighbors • Raise Cain’s Chicken Fingers • Red River Bank • SGD Petroleum Services • Spotshund • St. Elizabeth Hospital • Stirling Properties • Team Automotive Group • WIFK

Supporting Investor
Annual Investment of $4,000+

Acme-Refrigeration of Baton Rouge, Inc. • Atnor, Inc. • Bank of St. Francisville • Barber Brothers Contractors Co. • Waterboro Operations • Baton Rouge Tele Federal Credit Union • Beau Beaull Real Estate • Bercy • Brick Bros. Construction Co., LLC • Brook Services, Ltd. • Cajun Industries, LLC • Campus Federal Credit Union • The Celtic Group • Citizens - Coleman Partners Architects, LLC • Center • D’Honor Construction, Inc. • Ecolite International • Eden Morgan Corporation • Emergent Method • EDM Southern • Essential Federal Credit Union • Falmouth-Haggard, L.L.P. • Farm-to-Table Foods • Ferryman Lane Enterprises • GraceHolt • Guarantee Service Team of Professionals • Hotel Indigo • H.R. Skelton, LLC • Hart, Goulard & Associates, LLC • IMT Investor Bank • Klempner Dairy Farms • Kurz & Hebert Commercial Real Estate, Inc. • La Capital Federal Credit Union • Lazy Michaels Fine Jewelry • Lipsy’s • Long Law Firm, LLP • Louisiana Office Supply Co. • Louisiana Radio Network • Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center • Mathews • Merritt Lynch • Nestle-Schneider, Inc. • Nobles • Ochsner • Pantages • Baton Rouge River Bank • Agency • lime design & construction • Prime • Prime Occupational Medicine • Reymond James Advisors • Region’s Bank • Ritter Mazda • Roedel Parsons Koch Blache Bohr & McCollister • Shell Chemical • Std Richardson • Sun Service • Stonecage Capital Company • Staut & Company General Contractors • Surgical Specialty Center • UnitedHealthcare • Wampold Companies • Wash Orr Enterprises • Walton • Welby • WHLC Architecture

BRAC also receives support from Louisiana Economic Development $420 and the City of Baton Rouge/Parish of East Baton Rouge.
2019 WAS A PARTICULARLY legislative agenda. While these issues, though the session was not focused on five significant areas of need: addressing the Capital Region’s transportation crisis, enhancing quality of place, implementing comprehensive tax reform, improving economic competitiveness, and protecting educational reforms and expanding access to early childhood education. Real progress was made on several of these issues, though the session was not without its disappointments. Items in green are positive outcomes; those in red are negative outcomes, in reference to BRAC’s 2019 legislative agenda.

ADDRESS THE CAPITAL REGION’S TRANSPORTATION CRISIS

HB 578 by Rep. Tanner Magee directs the proceeds of the Deepwater Horizon settlement toward transportation. Most notably for the Capital Region, this legislation directs $1.25 billion to fund the LA 415 Bridge at the Intracoastal Canal, an important project for the region and a vital connecting piece to any future new bridge across the Mississippi River.

HB 542, Rep. Steve Carter’s gas tax bill, was voluntarily deferred in committee by the author. To pursue this kind of ambitious legislation during an election year was a long shot, but as Rep. Carter said in his comments in committee, the issue was too urgent not to try and address it.

HB 414 by Rep. Paula Davis would have dedicated sales tax revenues above $3.9 billion to transportation, up to $250 million per year, but was deferred in Senate Finance.

ENHANCE THE MARKET’S ABILITY TO DRIVE EXCEPTIONAL QUALITY OF PLACE

HB 446, new Act 384, by Rep. Paula Davis establishes guidelines to streamline the return of tax-delinquent properties into commerce and fight the accumulation of blighted properties in the community. This bill was one of BRAC’s top priorities for the session.

SUPPORT SMART, COMPREHENSIVE TAX REFORM

While a host of tax reform bills were filed in 2019, the election-year nature of the session meant that they received little attention. In fact, legislation on signature issues like a constitutional convention were not even filed this year.

IMPROVE LOUISIANA’S ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS

This year saw a variety of employer mandate bills come forward that would have negatively impacted Louisiana’s economic competitiveness, including but not limited to, HB 422 by Rep. Royce Duplessis and SB 155 by Sen. Troy Carter. These bills were all defeated.

Unfortunately, other important pieces of legislation failed to pass. HB 438 by Rep. Ted James, an important reform to the BRPD promotion process supported by BRPD Chief Murphy Paul. This bill broadens the pool of applicants eligible for promotions to the five most senior eligible applicants. Until now, the most senior eligible applicant was automatically selected.

This allows for the consideration of factors besides length of service, while retaining the seniority system, for these important personnel decisions. As the 2019 legislative session ends, we look toward the important legislative elections coming up in the fall. These elections will be even more significant than usual, as a large number of open seats will be filled with new policy makers who will be tasked during their first term with overseeing a redistricting process that will impact the state for many years to come.

FuturePAC, BRAC’s affiliated political action committee, will be active in the lead up to these elections, interviewing and endorsing candidates who commit to policies to enhance the quality of life and economic competitiveness of Louisiana and the Capital Region.

Logan Anderson
Director, Governmental Affairs and Special Projects
Anderson directs BRAC’s government operations, including legislative affairs and FuturePAC.
Join the Regional Economic Alliance of Louisiana for a two-day event featuring breakout sessions and thought leadership on economic development issues impacting communities across the state.

REGISTER AT BRAC.ORG/EVENTS

VENUE SPONSOR: L’Auberge Casino & Hotel
KEYNOTE SPONSOR: Central Louisiana Economic Development Alliance
PREMIER SPONSORS: LED • Neighbors Financial Credit Union • Taylor Porter
PROMOTIONAL SPONSORS: BIZ Northwest Louisiana • Louisiana Life Magazine
NETWORKING SPONSOR: EATEL
SUPPORTING SPONSORS: EATEL • GNO, Inc. • LEDA • NLEP • One Acadiana • SLEC • SWLA Economic Development Alliance

HOSTED BY THE REGIONAL ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LOUISIANA AND ORGANIZED BY THE BATON ROUGE AREA CHAMBER