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Ward II Industrial Park Certified as Development Ready

(Oil City-Vivian, LA.) Northern Caddo Parish received a boost to its economic development program when the Ward II Industrial Park announced today it received the Louisiana Economic Development (LED) Certified Sites designation. With 950 acres, the industrial site located on Highway 1 North between Vivian and Oil City becomes the largest certified industrial park in North Louisiana. This certification guarantees prospective companies that the industrial park is development ready, enhancing the marketability of the site.

“The certification of the Ward II industrial site is the result of hard work and cooperation of several groups and individuals over the course of the past year. We feel that this designation opens the door to many opportunities and look forward to working even more closely with LED, North Louisiana Economic Partnership (NLEP), and the Caddo Commission on exciting new projects that will benefit this area in the near future,” said Mike Francis, President of the Ward II Industrial District which oversees the park.

The Ward II Industrial District, otherwise known as the Gateway Region, includes Oil City and Vivian which suffered a devastating blow after the area’s largest employer VIP Boats closed down in 2008. At its peak, VIP Boats employed nearly 400 workers. Since the shutdown, Oil City and Vivian leaders along with state, local and regional partners have been working hard to recruit new companies to fill the void left by the boat manufacturer.

“The Ward II Industrial Park is a model of the hard work, ingenuity, and resilience of the people of northwest Louisiana. When a faltering economy dealt a tough blow to the area, the people of the Gateway region did not give up. Today, the Ward II Industrial Park is poised to recruit companies that are ready to thrive in an environment built for success. I’m grateful to everyone who dreamed, planned, and worked to make Ward II another shining example of Louisiana’s greatness,” said U.S. Congressman John Fleming.

AEP SWEPCO and NLEP assisted Ward II with the rigorous certification process which includes a comprehensive review by LED and an independent engineering firm for specific site details, such as zoning restrictions, title work, environmental studies, soil analysis and other factors.

“More and more companies want certified sites because they can fast-track their location or expansion projects. The certification assures them there are no surprises that could delay the construction of their facilities. We applaud LED for implementing the Certified Sites program, so Louisiana can remain competitive with other states. Part of NLEP’s strategy to enhance the marketability of the region is to have a certified site in every one of the 14 parishes that we serve,” said Kurt Foreman, NLEP President.

"In economic development, long-term dedication and persistence will pay off in dividends when we lay the groundwork that brings new businesses and jobs," said Frank Crockett, AEP SWEPCO Economic Development Manager.

The Ward II Industrial Park offers multi-modal access to rail, water, air and interstate transportation. It is zoned for heavy industrial with water, sewer, electricity and natural gas in place. Acreage is available for sale or lease. With all these amenities and now the LED Certified Sites designation, local officials believe the park will act as a catalyst to spur economic development in northern Caddo Parish.

What an amazing feat! A dream that has come to completion, created by the Ward II Industrial board, a volunteer organization who would not take no for an answer. Through their efforts partnering with the Caddo Parish Commission, Town of Vivian, Town of Oil City, NLEP, AEP-SWEPCO, and many others, Caddo Parish has an approximately 1000 acre certified industrial park. What an accomplishment!" said Doug Dominick, Caddo Parish Commissioner.

"The Ward II Industrial Park Certified Site designation is another step toward attracting industries to northern Caddo Parish. This certification will enhance our ability to recruit companies, which will have a snowball effect on our economy. New businesses will attract new residents and new tax dollars that will help improve our schools, business community and quality of life," said Mayor Chip Dickey, Oil City.

This certification represents the next chapter in the Gateway Region's comeback story, which began with the unwavering dedication, vision and hard work of state, local, and regional leaders.

"This accomplishment is the culmination of a generation of volunteer work by local leaders who have believed in the future of their communities. This work truly has a chance to bear fruit with the support of the state in its certification and marketing program, along with the regional marketing efforts of NLEP. I believe it will be a shining example of how local, regional, and state efforts can work synergistically to help developers find the best fit for their investment and provide sustained economic benefit for our communities," praised Mayor Stephen Taylor, Town of Vivian.

To cap off the celebration, local, state and regional officials cut the ribbon on the newly certified site. Participants included Congressman John Fleming; Vivian Mayor Stephen Taylor; Oil City Councilman James Sims; Caddo Commissioner Doug Dominick; Mike Francis, Ward II Industrial District President, Kurt Foreman, NLEP President; Larry Henson, LED Business Intelligence Director; and Frank Crockett, AEP SWEPCO Economic Development Manager.

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