

## 10/12 Magazine

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### VIEWPOINT

# The feud is fading

**M**ONTAGUES and Capulets. Hatfields and McCoys. Jets and Sharks. All famous players in well known tales of rivalry and feuding whose outcome ultimately resulted in both sides suffering. Not unlike these sagas, Louisiana has been the setting for its own drama of sorts and we are now paying the price.

Historically, there has been an underlying air of competitiveness between the New Orleans and Baton Rouge regions. This competitiveness, rooted in the mindset of scarcity, often left both areas squabbling over crumbs as progressive regions throughout the country nabbed the entire proverbial pie and flourished.

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**"We had confronted the enemy and he was us."**

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This age-old feud reached its peak in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, when our collective future was at stake. We had confronted the enemy and he was us.

At that time, recognizing that we had become our own worst enemy, a small group from the Baton Rouge and New Orleans regions got together and began to take the first steps toward building a relationship. In just two years, these initial seeds grew into the formation of the Southeast Super-Region Committee, a joint committee of Greater New Orleans, Inc. and the Baton Rouge Area Chamber.

In my opinion, this alliance is one of the most promising developments in my lifetime—an unprecedented step in formalizing a collaborative working relationship to promote a common agenda for the benefit of the entire region.



**MARTY MAYER**

As members of this Southeast Super-Region Committee, we recognize that our own businesses are not confined to simply one parish or even one region. We realize that our success is directly linked to the success of a much broader region and is not bound by invisible parish boundaries or political subdivisions.

We understand firsthand that businesses looking to relocate or expand in our region are concerned with the overall business climate, skilled workforce, the education system and the quality of life. These are issues that are important to us all and can best be addressed collaboratively.

Already our group has begun to tackle some weighty issues such as higher education reform, New Orleans International Airport, International Trade, and New Orleans to Baton Rouge inter-city rail. Already, others have begun to take notice of our group's collaborative efforts. I am encouraged that we have come so far in such a short time.

Unlike Romeo & Juliet or West Side Story, our tale will be re-written. More connects us than divides us. United, we have a greater ability to influence and affect positive change that will have long-term impact on our region and state.

United, we can all share in a much larger pie.

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*Marty Mayer is the president and CEO of Stirling Properties and chairman of Greater New Orleans Inc.*