

## VIEWPOINT

# Alliance banks on excellence

**T**wenty years ago, the Florida Parishes Economic Development Association was formed to advance the cause of job creation in Livingston, St. Helena, Tangipahoa, Washington, St. Tammany and other parishes.

With the collaborative efforts of economic development offices, Chambers of Commerce and local business leaders, the FPEDA gathered periodically to gain strength and share ideas, advocate for state funding and infrastructure expansion, and act as a conduit for information flow between its members.

Today, the FPEDA has been renamed the I-12 Alliance and has undertaken a broader scope, developing marketing tools to help the region grow into an economic powerhouse.

In 2006, the St. Tammany Economic Development Foundation sought and received a \$100,000 grant from the state Department of Economic Development to support a regional marketing effort.

With matching funds from Cleco Corp., St. Tammany Parish government and the parishes' economic development organizations, the agency hired AngelouEconomics, an Austin-based site-selection firm, to conduct a study and develop marketing materials.

Unveiled last January at Southeastern Louisiana University, the Angelou study has identified target industries most likely to find the I-12 Corridor attractive and has developed a Web site ([www.i12alliance.com](http://www.i12alliance.com)) to help the partners promote the area.

Angelou's evaluation of the region suggests four industries that will find the corridor an ideal place to build or expand—energy, logistics, materials and aerospace manufacturing. The Web site



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focuses on the aspects of the region most appealing to site selectors, and to the quality-of-life elements that help draw spouses and other family wage-earners.

With input from the five parishes and the participation of the Small Business Development Center at Southeastern, the Web site will be frequently updated to reflect local business success stories and herald improvements in the business climate in Louisiana.

One obstacle the Angelou study suggests must be overcome is the ongoing portrayal of south Louisiana as a disaster area. Part of the site and newsletter functions will be to educate journalists outside the region that while some elements of hurricane recovery continue, the I-12 corridor has recovered and is poised to become a significant economic engine that helps drive the Louisiana economy.

With printed collateral on the way to help reach out to business and industry, we are confident the I-12 Alliance will continue to live up to the motto enscrolled on the Web site's banner: "A smart move to the center of excellence." The I-12 corridor is, in fact, a Louisiana center of excellence. The I-12 Alliance will help make sure people know it.

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