

GATEWAY

Growing firm

JONES WALKER IS quietly building an empire along the 10/12 corridor.

The law firm has more than doubled its stable of lawyers since 1995, and last year merged with a Mobile, Ala., firm and acquired a Lafayette firm. Expect to see more of it in the coming year.

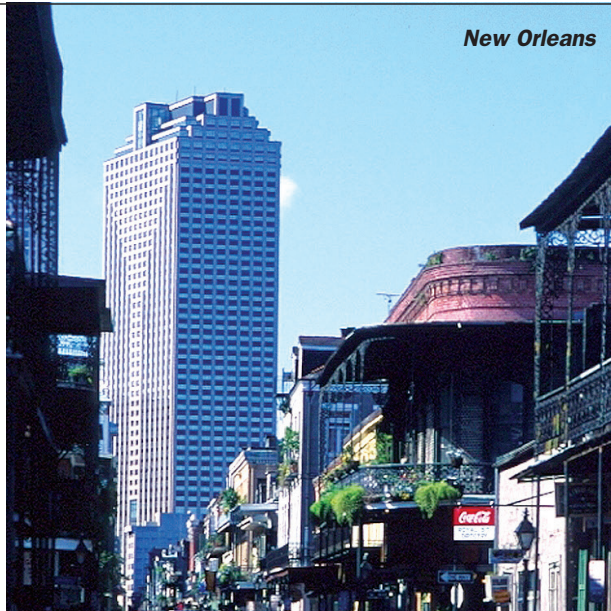
Jones Walker Managing Partner Bill Hines says it's part of a long-term strategy to become a full-service law firm along the Gulf Coast—the kind most major southern corporate clients have to go to Houston, Atlanta, Chicago or New York to find.

The goal is to build on existing strengths in energy, natural resources, maritime, financial services and health care and specialties in corporate transactions, securities, finance, bankruptcy and workouts to cover every significant area of legal practice.

“For the companies that reside along the corridor, we want to provide the same quality of legal service that historically they have gone elsewhere to find, and at a significantly reduced cost,” Hines says. “We want to provide a full-service line of sophisticated legal services—comparable to any firm in the country. That’s the strategy and the model.”

In the past year alone, Jones Walker climbed nearly 20 spots on the National Law Journal ranking of the country’s largest firms, to 163. The firm now has offices from Phoenix to Miami and up into Washington, D.C. For those clients who may benefit from legal representation close to the financial markets, New York City could very well be next.

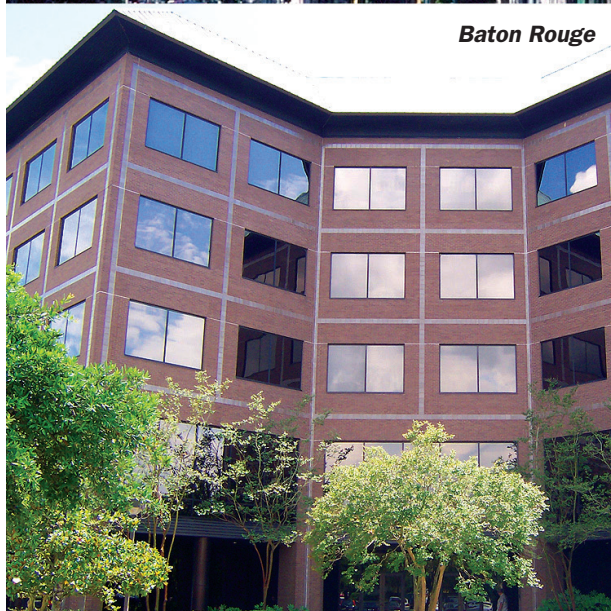
In September, Jones Walker merged with Miller, Hamilton, Snider & Odom LLC, based



New Orleans



Houston



Baton Rouge



Lafayette

Jones Walker Lawyers by the numbers

1995	131
2000	169
2005	215
2007	230
2008	264
2009	275

in Mobile. The politically connected Miller, Hamilton has specialized in banking law since its founding in 1971.

The move allowed Jones Walker to continue to advise International Shipholding Corp., a major client that moved to Mobile from New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. But it also gave the firm offices in Birmingham, Mobile, Montgomery—opening up the opportunity to capture more Alabama business—and in Atlanta. It also means additional lawyers for its existing Miami and D.C. offices.

Just two months later, Jones Walker acquired Longman Russo [formerly Perret Doise], which has been a staple in Lafayette for 21 years. Jones Walker has had an office in Lafayette since 1991.

“This merger brings much more depth and resources to Longman Russo,” says Gary Russo of Longman Russo. “In the past, when we had highly specialized issues in commercial transactions, we have had to refer to Jones Walker. In our market, particularly the oil and gas arena, there are highly sophisticated commercial transactions that do require areas of expertise we just didn’t have before. Now we can bring that level of service and sophistica-

tion in this local market.”

Jones Walker also scored a coup last year in hiring high-profile attorney Sanford Kaynor, formerly a private equity and securities partner at Ropes & Gray in New York. Kaynor, who on occasion worked with Jones Walker lawyers on transactions while employed by Ropes & Gray, says besides falling in love with New Orleans and its potential, he’s also drawn by the prospect of growing a significant Gulf Coast private equity practice consistent with Hines’ overall strategy.

Hines says Jones Walker considered two other mergers last year, but in the end decided it wasn’t a good match. “We’re very careful not to grow just for the sake of growing,” he says. “There are some national law firms that have had bad experiences adding groups of law firms that didn’t fit, and it caused problems down the line. Likewise, it can be just as important to pass on certain deals as it is to do them.”

Of any future mergers, acquisitions or talent snatching, Hines says only that there is “certainly more to come in 2009.”

—PENNY BROWN FONT