

Katrina + 5: Recovery to Transformation

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Marking the fifth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina but also embracing economic and environmental jolts sustained by the community in recent years, a new comprehensive report describes the greater New Orleans area as “rebounding” and “resilient,” while calling for the city to stem certain trends that could impair its move toward “betterment” and long-term prosperity.



The Crescent City is rebounding and resilient, according to the comprehensive research report, “The New Orleans Index at Five.” (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

The report, “[The New Orleans Index at Five](#),” issued on Aug. 4 by the Brookings Institution and the New Orleans Community Data Center, uses research contributed by nearly a dozen local experts including several from Tulane. It analyzed more than 20 indicators of the area's economy, inclusion, quality of life and sustainability over the last three decades.

“The report is important because it did two things,” says Tulane President Scott Cowen, who was a member of the report's steering committee. “It offered objective data about how we are progressing and what challenges are still out there. It also gave suggestions on what the community should continue to keep as its priorities.”

Despite enduring three “shocks” that include Hurricane Katrina, the national economic downturn and the BP oil spill, New Orleans is “rebounding and, in some ways, doing so better than before,” write co-authors Amy Liu of the Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program and Allison Plyer of the Greater New Orleans Community Data Center. Plyer is an alumnus of the Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine.

The authors add, however, that there are key economic, social and environmental trends that “remain troubling, testing the region's path to prosperity.”

Key indicators of growth and improved quality of life in the last five years include higher average wages, less poverty, better access to better schools and health care, greater entrepreneurship and increased civic capacity.

Tulane experts who contributed to the report were geographer Richard Campanella, associate director for the Tulane/Xavier Center for Bioenvironmental Research; Mark Davis, director of the Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy; Dr. Karen DeSalvo, professor of medicine and vice dean for community affairs and health policy; and Michael Schwam-Baird, assistant director of research for the Cowen Institute for Public Education Initiatives.