

# Healing the Scars

A new report looks at the long road to recovery from a disaster.

Three years after hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the Gulf Coast region's recovery from two of the greatest natural catastrophes in U.S. history has been sporadic. Scars left behind by the storms—vacant buildings, piles of rubble, deteriorating infrastructure—still remain in many parts of Louisiana and Mississippi. But a new report by the Rockefeller Institute of Government and the Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana indicates that the pace of recovery is poised to accelerate.

The report notes that public officials and community members involved in the rebuilding efforts are confident that within the next 10 years, the region will have fully recovered now that “the plans are there, much of the money is there, and the will is there.”

This long-term time frame, however, is in contrast to the initial hope that affected areas could quickly rebound from the storms. Richard Nathan, co-director of the

Rockefeller Institute, attributes the length of recovery to a fundamental issue: competing concepts of the future and how to rebuild toward that goal.

Any successful recovery effort, Nathan concludes, requires balancing decisive action while seeking adequate community input in the development of a rebuilding strategy, and that, he points out, “requires leadership.”

—Brendan Schlauch