medical district with the new hospital and a brand-new VA facilities next door would help bring the city's economy out of the doldrums.

Skeptics argued that Char-
y was essentially flimsy and that the state government's plan would take too long, cost too much, denude a historic neighborhood and leave old Charity a heightened mess.

Those concerns were mostly brushed aside, although the plan hardly sailed through. There was endless haggling over the extent of the damage from the flood. As with public housing, it was incisive that the damage was catastrophic. But there was no agreement on any plan to rebuild the site or to relocate the hospital, a process that also is that of determining how much damage was

Eventually, the state got its way when an appeal panel awarded the state $475 million, roughly three times what the feds had offered, which allowed officials to cut on financing. Almost 10 years after the storm, the new University Medical Center will open in August, under the management of BCM Health, which owns and manages Children's Hospital.

While the new hospital has been under construction, experts have been offered by the much smaller former LSU Hospital.

Routine and primary medical care, such as management of hypertension, in the past often fell to Charity to provide, has mostly been farmed out to a system of neighborhood-based clinics whose expansion into the void has been supported by federal and state aid.

This vision has been mostly lauded but is under constant threat of cuts from the state Legislature. 

Jay out; scars remain

Whether the seismic chas-
ges wrought in these systems will upend the health of New Or-
leans—especially the poor, who depend on them—will be left to the future.

Future, too, will the effect of the storm on the health care system's ability to provide vital care on people who live in neighborhoods which were flooded. Many people have decisions to make.

It's still early to render a clear verdict. The new hospital is just about to open its doors. The dream model of what health care delivery has been in place for years now. HANO is still in the middle of its redevelopment,

and until the school system has been thoroughly reorganized structurally, that structure is ever changing, while the brick-and-mortar model is still far from complete.

There are no shortage of opinions about how well things are going, however. Charter school proponents, for in-

stance, say it's impossible to argue with their results, mainly across the board gains in key indicators, graduation rates and IEP passag

But skeptics, even those who acknowledge there are positives in the new systems, say the real story is that the government is simply throwing in the towel—admitting it can't properly educate poor children, house them safely, or deliver them quality care, and leaving it out to private or semi-private contractors that may or may not do better but that are surely not necessary to the outcome.

"Certainly some would say that all this is much better than they were before," said Bill Cates, director of the LSU Longevity Law Center at Loyola University and an outspoken opponent of the changes. "But others would say, 'I lost my house, I lost my school and I lost my city.'

Quigley gives the theoreti-
cal example of a family who before Katrina lived in the Lafitte project, within walking distance of low-wage work in the tourist economy and also near their children's school.

"If they're back in New Or-
leans, they're probably living in Section 8 or with relatives in New Orleans East, and who knows where their kids are going to school?" he said. "That's a much tougher life than liv-

ing within walking distance of school and work."

Former City Councilman Ar-
nie Fathower, who was outspo-
kyn in his support of the HANO

overhaul—and who has since served for New Orleans as elected officials—has been impossible to track the exact number of thousands of individual lives were changed by the reforms. But in his view, it's simply impossible to argue that the systems have not been improved.

I think those were landmark changes from what existed be-

fore Katrina. And they were re-

ally the byproduct of the un-

qualified recognition that this

was a great city but being

sick and that it had deficiencies

that had to be cured. New Orleans

was going to give up the

city was going to give up."

"I recognize all parties don't agree on the reforms that have been taken place. But if you talk to non-attorneys, I think the schools have im-

proved, it's certainly a much better public housing situation."

For all concerned, I think New Orleans has made tremen-

dous strides—to keep part-

taneous and inable to residue the part of a great city," Fathower said.

While it may take another decade or more for history to render its verdict on the changes, it's likely that some of the wounds inflicted in the post-Katrina battles will not have been heal-

ed. There is permanent scar-

ITY among some skeptics that the city's citizen wielded their power to fundamentally make

over systems that primarily serve the economic interests of a small group when those people were still ruling.

Leilani Qualls, a former state

school board member who

helped devise the school reform was in a way unaccountable support of the reforms, which was unavailable to a controversial figure. She is a former of how much rau-

cous reform.

"I don't see a lot of the school, a lot of people had a hard time getting, lost their jobs. The rules of the of the post-Katrina world has changed. This hap-

pened while they were already

in trouble."

While we can't talk much about success because everybody is walking on eggshells. It's a rough time for the pain. I do not want to see how you can over from that."

Follow Gordon Russell on

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WASHINGTON POST PHOTO BY BRYAN BENNET

Jasmine Sede, a sixth-grader at New Orleans College Prep charter school, consults a world map to find England during class. Since Hurricane Katrina in 2005, New Orleans has seen a major expansion in charter schools.

Advocate staff photo by SCOTT TIMBERLAKE

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