



July 17, 2017 Master Plan Amendments Update

- Shrinking of the Force of Law provision to one chapter, rather than the entire Master Plan

With so many vague and poorly conceived amendments and extraneous issues clouding important land use regulations, we've just about thrown our hands up on the Force of Law issue. Why would we advocate for the Master Plan to be strictly enforced if it will do more damage than good? It became abundantly clear during last Monday's proceedings that we should be careful what we wish for because what we might get could be horrendous. And still, we question the legality of arbitrarily inserting new wording into the Master Plan that states only Chapter 14 has the Force of Law. Does that legally override the vote of the citizens on the Charter change that the entire plan had the Force of Law?

Last Monday's eloquent speakers shared the need to revisit the entire unwieldy Master Plan, to streamline it to remove extraneous language, issues and far-reaching concepts that are needlessly included. The Master Plan should provide clarity and predictability about land use issues. The question truly is - should we continue to put even more lipstick on this proverbial pig?

The Bureau of Governmental Research (BGR) twice issued reports supporting a complete overhaul of the Master Plan, working with a professional who's guided other cities like ours through this arduous process. The BGR's 2010 report reviewed the then draft Master Plan document, saying it "did not provide an effective guide for shaping the future physical development of the city," among other things.

From the BGR's 2010 Report:

"Unfortunately, the draft plan still falls short of the requirements for a good master plan. While the plan provides basic guidance on land use, it fails to provide concrete guidance in important areas, such as urban design. In key areas, such as housing and historic preservation, the draft plan cedes planning to a new group or future plan – rather than actually presenting a plan. The organization of goals, strategies and actions remains unclear and inconsistent, making the plan difficult to use. The focus is heavily short-term.

Finally, the draft plan fails to effectively address serious challenges facing the city or provide thoughtful priorities for achieving the vision it sets out in its opening chapter. Getting the plan right is vital. Once the City Council adopts the plan, all land use laws and decisions, as well as the city's plans for capital improvements, must be consistent with it. The City Council should return the draft plan to the

City Planning Commission with instructions to immediately begin the process of remedying its shortcomings. Some of these problems can be addressed in the limited time the City Charter allots for revisions at this stage. Correcting other deficiencies will take more time than the

current master planning cycle allows. These problems will have to be addressed through major amendments in the next annual review. We urge the City Council to provide the City Planning Commission now with the resources it needs to complete the task properly. New Orleans needs a clear, focused, coherent and credible guide for all aspects of the city's physical development. The draft plan does not provide that."

See the BGR reports for more information:

A Need for Clarity: The Revised New Orleans 2030 Draft Plan, April 2010.

<http://www.bgr.org/reports/master-plan-falls-short-of-mission/>

It's the Law: Land Use Decision: Making and the Master Plan, October 28, 2015.

<http://www.bgr.org/reports/its-the-law-land-use-decision-making-and-the-master-plan/>

City Council hearing on the Master Plan Amendments is Thursday, July 27.

To review the Master Plan Amendments working document, please use the links, below – the first is the full text and proposed revisions and the second link is the Future Land Use Map.

<http://nolacitycouncil.com/docs/resources/masterplanamendments/Cal.%20No.%2031917%20-%20Attachment%20A.pdf>

<http://nolacitycouncil.com/docs/resources/masterplanamendments/Cal.%20No.%2031918%20-%20Attachment%20A.pdf>

Also, this is a helpful summary of all amendments - [Committee for a Better New Orleans' Guide to the Master Plan](#)