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## **BGR MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **BGR: Time for Strong Growth Management in St. Tammany**

The Bureau of Governmental Research released today a report entitled *Slip-Sliding Away? The Challenge of Implementing St. Tammany's Vision for Growth Management*. The report is the second installment in BGR's new Emerging Issues series on topics in Orleans, Jefferson, and St. Tammany Parishes.

In the report, BGR examines St. Tammany's vision for the future and identifies obstacles to achieving that vision. Obstacles include: a growth pattern that creates a disjointed transportation network, unmanageable fragmentation of sewer infrastructure, and strip commercial development that exacerbates traffic problems and erodes the natural splendor of the Parish.

To address these problems, St. Tammany must undertake a stringent program that forces growth into compact, integrated, environmentally sound patterns and that asserts the preservation of rural and natural areas as a central priority. This will require a comprehensive approach that includes institutional changes limiting the Parish Council's discretion in the area of land use.

BGR has made a series of recommendations that would strengthen planning and zoning, provide for a sensitively and sensibly designed diversity of development options, and protect the environment. The specific recommendations are as follows:

To give New Directions 2025 staying power

- Through amendment to the Parish's charter or by ordinance, clarify that the master plan in all its elements will bear the force of law and, thereby, that all ordinances, as well as government and private actions, must conform to it.
- Through a charter amendment, limit amendment of the Master Plan to a frequency no greater than biennial.
- Strengthen the Land Use Plan by restoring the mandatory language that was replaced with weaker, advisory language by parish planning officials.
- Upon completion of the master plan, complete and adopt a comprehensive zoning law that conforms to the master plan.
- Foster coordination between the Parish and municipalities and work toward a partnership to produce a fully integrated land use plan.

To further the Parish's town-and-country vision

- Restrict development to sites adjacent to existing residential and commercial areas.
- Advance final land use and transportation plans that firmly mandate infrastructural connectivity, demanding multiple through-street connections (including new major thoroughfares) for all future residential developments.
- Find resources, whether through impact fees or taxes, for the acquisition of land by the Parish for public parks and preserves.
- To promote more sensitive development of land, replace the existing quarter-acre minimum lot size with a far greater minimum (farm-sized) for rural areas and, in developing areas, with a range of smaller lot sizes that can be used in developments with

significant, integrated common space. Developments that include smaller lot sizes should be subject to appropriate overall density restrictions.

- To preserve rural areas and natural assets, create and enforce strong zoning standards that provide protection from incursions by residential, commercial, or industrial development. This means the creation of a zoning system that is largely immune to the discretion of government officials.
- Encourage sensitively designed cluster and mixed-use communities to provide a greater diversity of development options and more efficient development of land.
- Replace the current planned unit development (PUD) guidelines with a more sophisticated approach that includes clear, mandatory regulations and provides a formalized variety of allowable planned developments. Require that developments conform to the Land Use Plan and harmonize with adjacent land uses. Each proposal for a planned development should clearly specify the classification of development for which the developer is applying.

To protect the waterways from sewage

- Where appropriate and feasible, nudge new developments toward cities that offer dependable and environmentally sound sewer service.
- Require that, where city sewer services are absent, development tap into regional or consolidated sewage treatment systems.
- Enforce requirements that existing private sewage treatment systems meet minimum environmental standards.

“St. Tammany Parish is facing its moment of truth,” said Janet R. Howard, BGR’s President and CEO. “Unless the Parish confronts sprawl head-on with aggressive growth management, it will eventually destroy the natural beauty and quality of life that form its most valuable assets. Now is the time to implement the vision so clearly enunciated in the Vision Element of New Directions 2025.”

*Slip-Sliding Away? The Challenge of Implementing St. Tammany's Vision for Growth Management* can be found at [www.bgr.org](http://www.bgr.org).

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BGR is a private, nonprofit, independent research organization. Since its founding in 1932, it has been dedicated to informed public policy-making and the effective use of public resources in the Greater New Orleans area. For more information call Janet Howard at 525-4152 or visit BGR's website, [www.bgr.org](http://www.bgr.org).