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**BGR Release:  
Ordinance would Jump the Gun on Recovery Plans**

Half a year ago, after a series of abortive or vacillating recovery planning efforts, New Orleanians got a breath of fresh air when the Mayor’s Office of Recovery Management unveiled a plan to prioritize the redevelopment of specific areas of the city. Recovery Management provided maps that showed the locations of 17 Target Areas for recovery and broke them into three broad categories based on the amount of damage and the level of investment needed. Soon thereafter, Recovery Management provided more detailed maps and general information on the principles it adhered to in choosing the locations.

Early on, Recovery Management stated that it would take a few months for the particulars to emerge. As the months have passed, Recovery Management has not shared much more in the way of substantive details with the general public. It has provided only general concepts and stated that while detailed plans have been drafted, conversations with certain neighborhood groups, developers and members of the City Council are ongoing in private. To date, Recovery Management has not made public a detailed, prioritized plan for either the 17 zones or the city as a whole. It promises that a public unveiling of such a plan is right around the corner.

Tomorrow, the City Council plans to vote on an ordinance that would amend the 2007 operating budget to appropriate \$117.3 million in federal Community Development Block Grant funds to sub-accounts in the Office of Recovery Management for broad purposes, as set forth in the table below. In essence, the question before the City Council is whether to approve the appropriation of tens of millions of rebuilding dollars to Recovery Management, in advance of the release by that office of a detailed, prioritized plan and the public vetting that would reasonably precede such a momentous appropriation.

**Proposed Uses for the \$117 million by  
the Office of Recovery Management (ORM)**

Use	Amount (\$)
ORM Program Delivery Cost	5,864,710
ORM School Facilities & Programs	20,000,000
ORM Recreation Facilities	20,000,000
ORM Libraries	1,000,000
ORM Economic Development	20,000,000
ORM Blight Reduction	10,000,000
ORM Community Facilities	20,000,000
ORM City Roads & Infrastructure	25,000,000
ORM Environmental Soil Assessment	1,429,491
<b>Total</b>	<b>117,294,201</b>

Source: City of New Orleans Ordinance Calendar No. 26,660.

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The administration and council are attempting to expedite the deployment of recovery funds as they become available. This is a worthy goal. However, appropriating funding prior to the release of a detailed plan and public review places the cart before the horse. It also poses the danger that the public review would bear the significance of an after-thought.

As noted above, Recovery Management has been meeting with certain neighborhood groups, interested developers and City Council members. This is not an adequate base for vetting plans that will, in various ways, affect the entire city.

Recovery Management promises that a public unveiling of detailed plans is coming soon and that there will be a subsequent public review process. But if the public can wait a bit longer to find out the details of Recovery Management's proposals, then the City Council can wait to appropriate the funds to pay for those proposals. Transparency and the public interest require no less.

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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.

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