



# Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans

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*Times-Picayune*

### **Panel deadlocks on New Orleans master plan bill**

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by Ed Anderson

BATON ROUGE -- A House committee dealt a major setback Wednesday to a Senate-passed bill that would require voters in New Orleans to have the final say on a post-Katrina redevelopment plan. The sponsor of the bill said he will ask that it be re-heard.

The Committee on Municipal, Parochial and Cultural Affairs voted 8-8 on Senate Bill 75 by Sen. Edwin Murray, D-New Orleans, a measure that drew a cast of New Orleans political figures to testify for and against the measure.

The tie vote means the bill remains in committee and cannot advance to the House floor. Rep. Regina Barrow, D-Baton Rouge, who chairs the panel and favors the bill, said she will set the measure for another hearing, possibly later this week.

The Bureau of Governmental Research, a non-partisan, issues research organization in New Orleans, called Murray's bill an "affront to the home rule charter" of the city, an assessment that Murray said is wrong.

"This bill will give people a buy-in" for the future development of the city of New Orleans, Murray said. "It is a chance for the people to vote on a master plan. .Â?.Â?. A vote of the people will help guide the process."

Voters amended the City Charter last year to allow the planning process to begin and require that the plan have the force of law once adopted. One version of the proposed master plan already has been the subject of about 200 meetings, officials said.

A second version of the plan is due out next month and further rounds of hearings among New Orleans residents will be held. The plan should be in the hands of the City Council for approval, rejection or changes by the end of the year, New Orleans Planning Commission Director Yolanda Rodriguez said.

If adopted, the council can amend it once a year, she said. "If this plan goes to a vote of the people, it will kill this plan," she said.

Joining Murray in seeking passage of the bill were New Orleans City Councilwoman Cynthia Willard-Lewis, the lone member of the Council to support the bill; and former New Orleans Mayor Sidney Barthelemy.

"This is a bill about preserving our democracy," Barthelemy said. "It is all about who is going to represent and control the city of New Orleans."

City Attorney Penny Moses-Fields, Council Members Stacey Head and Shelly Midura; and Ruthie Frierson, representing **Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans**, teamed up to testify against Murray's measure.

Moses-Fields said the bill attempts to "usurp the power of the Home Rule Charter" by having the Legislature pass a bill interfering with a local issue that is dealt with by the charter.

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