

Public Participation in Development Control Activities in Awka City, Anambra State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

One of the vital tools for effective management and planning of towns and cities is development control and this requires the efforts of both the government and citizens. Public participation has been identified as a catalyst for effective and sustainable developmental policy implementation in a people-oriented holistic approach at minimal cost. Planning and production of planning schemes or master plans is normally followed by the major task of proper implementation and monitoring so as to ensure that developers and indeed the people of the area, adhere strictly to the provisions of the plan, using development control machineries. Since these plans are for the people, the need for their participation cannot be over emphasized in securing of higher compliance level at minimal costs. This study sought to examine the level of public participation in the development control activities of Anambra State Urban Development Board (ASUDEB) so as to determine improvement measures for its activities in Awka city.

The study employed secondary data from the official records of ASUDEB and primary data from structured interview of staff and urban developers, randomly selected to form a sample size of 400 determined using Taro Yamane formulae. It was revealed that between 2002 and 2011 year period, Anambra State Urban Development Board (ASUDEB) had no public participation programs in development control activities in the city. The result revealed a high rate of demolition exercises with many developers as victims. Plans submission for approval got the highest patronage of public involvement at 97.2% rate while complaints and reports had Encroachment at 0.3%; Trespass at 0.6%; Blockage of Access roads/ Drainages at 0.6%; and building contraventions at 1.3%. Urban developers in the city expressed dissatisfaction in this type of development control approach. Majority of them termed it embarrassing and extortive. They expressed willingness to participate more in development control activities while calling for transparency in these activities.

Key words: Public participation, Development, Development control, and Development control activities.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The growth of cities if unguided could lead to deterioration, sprawl, decay and the growth of slums. Central to physical planning activities all over the world, is the control of developments. This exercise of duty, carried out by urban planning agencies or authorities has the purpose of ensuring the efficiency and functionality of development activities for the safety, health, comfort and convenience of the general public as well as for the aesthetic quality of the environment.

Since all development control activities are planned for the welfare of the people, the need for their involvement becomes very fundamental. The involvement of the people through popular or public participation will no doubt make compliance to planning standards and regulations better, thus making the work of development control agents easier.

In most countries like Malaysia, public participation is not just an alternative for better planning, but a requirement which is stated in their laws (Dasimah and Oliver, 2009). This is because the people themselves will not only appreciate and comply with development regulations which they are part of, right from its formation, but would also contribute in monitoring contraventions and ensuring adherence to planning standards and regulations in urban development activities. Today, various government policies and agencies see it as an absolute necessity for people to have a say in development planning (Federal Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2006) and this agrees with the submission by Efobi and Anierobi (2013), that the organizational structure of many public planning agencies do not have the adequate involvement of the informal sector and so, should be re-invented. There is therefore the need to involve the people in the development control activities at

various levels and in various categories, right from plan preparation down to implementation, monitoring and evaluation of plans.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Concept of Development Control

The concept of development control has been defined in different ways by different authors. Section 22 of the 1971 Town and Country Planning Act of England States that development control involves carrying out building engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land or the making of any material change in the use of any building or other lands. Adebayo (1996) in Alabi et al (2010) saw development control as an instrument used in exercising powers. In this paper, development control can be defined as the process and procedures concerned with the development of land and buildings, so as to ensure compliance to the required and stipulated physical planning standards of a functional development in order to achieve the safety, comfort and functionality of the inhabitants of the settlement. It ensures an orderly growth of human settlements by stipulating adequate standards for all aspects of land use through the provision of adequate lighting, ventilation, open spaces facilities and infrastructures which make life worth living.

2.2 Development Control Functions of Physical Planning Agencies in Nigeria

Many nations of the world have set up agencies with stipulated policy mandates for the effective control of developments in the built environment. In Nigeria, the 1946 Town Planning Ordinance instituted by the colonial masters specifically spelt out development control functions as borrowed from Britain. Sections 27-63 of the 1992 urban and regional planning law of the federation also concurred to this, made room for public participation and further strengthened planning practices and development control activities in Nigeria by the establishment of Town Planning Authorities with functions at the three tiers of government i.e. the National, States and Local government areas of the country. The stipulated development control functions include:

- a.** Development Plan Approval: The development control department is empowered to approve or reject the application for a development permit by land developers. This depends on the compatibility and suitability of the development as well as its impact on the designated area and whether it is backed up with the required documents via site plan, building plans, structural plans and certificates of occupancy. Approved plans are then monitored to ensure strict compliance. This includes private and public developments. Developers without permit are dealt with in accordance to the law.
- b.** Conservation and Preservation Functions: This is to preserve trees and monuments so that they are not tampered with in the course of any development activities by a developer.
- c.** Control of out Door Advertisements: This curtails the indiscriminate mounting of bill boards as they obstruct visibility to both drivers and pedestrians. The bill boards also reduce the aesthetic quality of an area hence, should be checked.
- d.** Enforcement of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA): Development control Agencies are empowered by law to reject or stop the development of projects which by law requires an environmental impact assessment until it is carried out and the report forwarded with other documents. On this basis, the impact of such projects on the built environment would be identified and mitigations determined before developments are allowed to commence.

2.3 Development Control Machineries in Anambra State

Since the creation of the state in 1991, the following development control machineries have been in operation:

- a.** Anambra State Capital Development Authority Scheme 1991.
- b.** 1992 Urban and Regional Planning Law.
- c.** Anambra State Urban Development Board (ASUDEB) Edict No. 6 of 1998
- d.** Anambra State Urban Development Board (ASUDEB) Building Regulation, 2000.

- e. These machineries have been in use for development control functions in the state and they all have provisions for public participation in development control functions, however, their implementation is still not visible, hence this study.

2.4 Public Participation in Development Control activities

Studies have established the basis for public participation in planning. For the fact that planning and planning decisions affect people; they have the right to know and participate in making these plans and decisions, particularly in areas that have impact on their immediate environment. Public participation is simply the act of involving the public and public organizations in physical planning and planning decision making processes with the aim of achieving sustainable development. Dasimah et al (2009), Alabi et al (2010), Creighton (2005:7), Ogbazi J.U (2002) and U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (2002) among others have variously emphasized the need for public participation and saw it as a two way communication process and interaction between decision makers and the public requiring input and feedback which will culminate into the implementation process. Public participation is not limited to individual citizens but also to associations and organizations, that have interests in development control activities. Anierobi and Efobi (2013) went further to stress the need to incorporate even the informal sector in the organizational structure of government agencies. An effective and successful public participation program should be able to allow members of the community to have an active voice in the process and to have free access to important information. Public participation can be in form of (a) Public hearing (b) Workshops (c) Focus Group Discussions and (d) Public exhibitions.

3.1 The Study Area, Awka, Anambra State

Awka is the capital city of Anambra State created on the 27th of August, 1991. The city has grown tremendously over the years with the influx of human population. The ever increasing migration of people to the city has created problems of poor infrastructure, environmental sanitation, erosion control and social services which are currently in short supply. With a population of over a million people in an area coverage of about 120Km² and with the seat of government, institutions, organizations and industries; the resources of the young capital city remains largely untapped. There is therefore the need to plan for a proper exploration, management and administration of her vast human and natural resources so as to meet up with her rapid growth rate and increasing haphazard urbanization. Development control which is the focus of this study is the mandate of the Anambra State Urban Development Board (ASUDEB), set up to take charge of the regulation of development activities in the state.

4.0 DATA ANALYSIS

The study revealed that the organizational structure of the state's development control agency, ASUDEB which comprises of various departments has no provision for public participation. Its records show that between, year 2002 and 2011 there have been no public participation in the development control activities of ASUDEB rather, official records had complaints and reports from the public as the only means of public involvement. Demolition records revealed that many builders were victims. Plans submitted for approval got the highest patronage of all development control activities at 97.2% rate and this was attributed to the high rate of demolition exercises of the agency which inflicts socioeconomic cost on developers. ASUDEB Records also had public complaint on encroachment at 0.3%, trespass at 0.6%, blockage of access roads/ drainages at 0.6% and building contraventions at 1.3%. All these have been on the increase over the years with year-2011 having the highest percentage of 16% while 2002 and 2003 had only 7% as shown in table 1. The result of the research interview also revealed that urban developers in the city expressed their grievance in the way and manner development control activities and functions are carried out in the city. Majority of them termed it embarrassing and extortive. 100% of respondents expressed willingness to participate in development control programs in the city while calling for transparency. Staffing, funding and equipment as well as security were challenging factors revealed to be grossly inadequate thereby hampering the effective and sustainable development control service delivery in the state.

Table 1. Public Participation in Urban Development Control Activities of ASUDEB.

S/n	Year	Building plan submission for Approval	Reports on Encroachment	Reports on Trespass	Reports on Blockage of Access road/ Drainages	Reports on Building contraventions	Total No. of Reports (%)
1	2002	1150	6	9	11	31	1,207(7%)
2	2003	1100	2	11	3	27	1,143(7%)
3	2004	1200	6	14	5	17	1,242(7%)
4	2005	1500	8	4	17	38	1,567(9%)
5	2006	1606	3	7	21	15	1,652(10%)
6	2007	1647	5	16	5	9	1,682(10%)
7	2008	1800	1	3	8	23	1,835(11%)
8	2009	1779	7	10	13	40	1,849(11%)
9	2010	2308	5	6	10	16	2,345(14%)
10	2011	2619	11	19	7	12	2,668(16%)
11	Total	16,709	54	99	100	228	17,190
12	%	97.2	0.3	0.6	0.6	1.3	100

SOURCE: RESEARCH SURVEY, 2012.

5.0 DISCUSSIONS

The following factors were identified as militating against public participation in development control functions in Awka.

1. **Fund:** Poor financial capability and revenue base does not allow for a meaningful and effective public participation in the city giving the cost implications of such collaborative efforts.
2. **Public attitude:** This has been mostly repulsive and negative towards the agency and requires an effective public enlightenment programs that will help them understand and buy into the idea.
3. **Government attitude:** Given the huge revenues generated by the agency this has not been used by government to run the affairs of the Agency and to implement their policies and to enforce their development control laws.
4. **Poor staffing and corruption:** Poor staffing and corruption on the part of development control officials has deterred public participation in development control activities since most of the officials are only interested in collecting bribes.

6.0 Recommendations and Conclusion

1. **Funding:** Government should provide adequate funds for development control activities in Awka so as to ensure effective public participation which will enhance compliance, reduce net cost and make the job easier. Better revenue generating windows should also be opened, so that they could have enough funds to spin into greater public participation programs.
2. **Public attitude:** The repulsive public attitude towards development control activities in the city could be corrected through effective public participation. There is therefore the need for suitable and sustainable public participation programs which are designed for efficient development control service delivery in the city. Such programs could be (a) Public hearing (b) Workshops (c) Focus Group Discussions (d) Public exhibitions among other techniques.
3. **Government attitude:** Government officials should be made to understand the benefits of public participation in planning, in order to achieve sustainable cities at minimal costs. Proper review, implementation, enforcement and monitoring of development control functions which are enshrined in physical planning laws, should be undertaken by government with a view to ensuring effective and

sustainable public participation for sustainable city development. This should be collaborated with proper funding.

4. **Poor staffing and corruption:** Adequate staffing, staff training and capacity building should be planned and implemented so as to meet up with current urbanization trend while ensuring strict adherence and proper implementation of development control policies, regulations and schemes as provided by law in order to ensure the integration of the public in development control activities for sustainable city development. Corrupt practices should not be left unchecked rather, officials should be subjected to proper monitoring so as to ensure that the spirit of zero tolerance for corruption and eschew corrupt practices. When found wanting in development control agencies, defaulting staff should be prosecuted as a deterrent to others.

The above recommendations if properly addressed would go a long way towards ensuring entronement of public participation in development control activities for achieving sustainable city.

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