Implications of Urban and Regional Planning Laws on Urban Renewal Projects in Akure, Nigeria

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Abstract

The growth, development and sustenance of urban area in Nigeria rely largely on various urban renewal projects executed by the State through both public and private institutions. Such projects serve as catalyst for improving the physical look of the environment and more importantly for sustenance of human survival. In order to achieve an orderly environment that is devoid of environmental hazards, it is most importantly to ensure that urban renewal projects are carried out in accordance with laid out planning laws existing in the Country. The focus of this paper is on the implications of urban and regional planning laws on urban renewal projects carried out in Akure between 2007 and 2012. These projects spread across various parts of the town and each of the projects was identified to assess their compliance with the regulations. It was discovered that despite the agitation for the implementation of urban and regional planning laws in the state, the level of adherence to planning standards and regulations is very low in urban renewal projects, particularly in existing projects that were upgraded. Suggestion was made that if planning legislations were followed in implementing urban renewal projects, it will ensure dignity and remove the intrigues attract to implementing urban and regional planning programmes and it will also go a long way in ensuring sustainability of every urban renewal projects in Akure and Nigeria as a whole. **Keywords**: Planning Laws, Urban Renewal, Planning Regulations, Urban Renewal Projects

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Urban growth involves a twin process of maintaining the already built up areas as well as maintaining and rebuilding newer ones (Omole, 2000). The presence of slum for instance, poses a very great threat to the financial strength of the town. This is more noticeable looking at the substantial amount the government spends on the revamping the slum settlements, the amount spend on health care and the attempts put into the provision of amenities (which have not totally materialized) and these tell on the courage of the government and the strength of its purse. The built environment in many developing countries particularly Nigeria is fast decaying. The rapid urbanization, rural-urban migration and decades of steady economic downturn, decay of urban infrastructure and negligent urban house keeping (World Bank, 2005). One problem of the Nigeria urban built environment is noncompliance with building bye-laws and regulations. The major areas of default are in the area of zoning, setbacks, building along utility lines and non-adherence to provision of adequate ventilation. The neglected has resulted to environmental degradation; which invariably is a menace to human health, brings traffic injury and death and undermines the civic pride.

The formal urban and regional planning activities in Nigeria began with Planning Ordinance of 1902 which empowered the then Governor of the colony and protectorate of Southern Nigeria to set up Europeans Reservation. The Ordinance, which specified how European reservation should be located and segregated from the native location, was the first town planning regulation that made conscious attempt to effectively plan for any segment of a Nigerian town (Oyesiku, 2004). This was the first attempt to institutionalize urban development in Nigeria and form the prefix in which urban and regional planning projects execution is being carried out. Urban and regional planning delineates the forms in which urban growth should be channeled. A modern urban and regional planning law in Nigeria was the enactment of the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law Decree No. 88 of 1992. This was after forty six year of the 1946 Ordinance, which is the first unified urban and regional planning law in Nigeria, where urban renewal projects were given providence. Land use act of 1978 gave power to the governor of the state to have power over the control of land in the state and this resulted in delineation of some areas for urban renewal projects.

In spite of the increasing knowledge of modern planning and number of planners, physical development in cities of less developed countries remains an array of chaos and disorder. This, as manifested in urban sprawl, poor access to dwellings, bad drainage, housing congestion, uncontrolled and increasing density of physical development, among many other problems, characterize the high-density areas of Nigerian cities. Although such measures of development control as the application of minimum plot sizes, standard on windows, doors, height of buildings, road widths, among others, have been introduced to control buildings and general

appearance of cities (Olajuyin and Olayiwola, 1985), the problem of undesirable nature and pattern of development in high-density areas of our cities is still a serious one. The reason for the pattern may not be farfetched. The areas do not only provide abodes for the poor natives who hold tight to extended family properties, but also provide locations of relatively high accessibility for businesses, cottage industries and services. For these, developers- individuals, corporate bodies, and even government tend to develop or redevelop properties in the area to the fullest, with the ultimate aim of maximizing the use of space regardless of the whether or not such an action is in the interest of physical planning. Their actions are made more manifest in the process of conversion and redevelopment of properties to accommodate more businesses or less importantly more dwelling units.

The rapid urbanization witnessed by Ondo State, particularly in the last three decades since its creation, has brought along with it an array of physical and economic development problems. The inabilities of previous governments to initiate programmes that will guide the growth of the various settlements and make them efficient, safe and efficient have made matters worse. Thus, major settlements in the State, including Akure have not only had some form of urban sprawl and decay, their growth continues to be stunted. Urban renewal projects in Akure, the capital city of the State will not only provide an opportunity to guide the growth of the town, it has the potential of stimulating economic development in the sub region.

2.0 THE STUDY AREA

Ondo State remains one of the most urbanized states in Nigeria. It has perhaps the largest number of large size human settlements. With a population of 3, 441, 024 in 2006 (National Population Commission, 2010), there are indications that the State will continue to witness rapid urbanization. The unplanned form of urban development being witnessed in major settlements across the State has exacerbated other problems. These include the growth of slums and blighted neighborhoods, urban sprawl, urban decay, poor sanitation, inadequacy of basic urban infrastructure – water supply, electricity supply, health and educational facilities, among others. In addition, intra settlements and inter settlements transportation have been inefficient, so also are services / facilities for recreation and tourism, which are inadequate.

It therefore, means that for the State to enhance its growth potentials and improve the level of its socio – economic development, the growth of its settlements must be guided through well thought – out development plans. Such plans will among others, identify the potentials of each town and thus, prepare it for meeting the challenges of human settlements dynamics and socio – economic development. Accordingly, for Akure who double as the State Capital and one of the important settlements in the State, it therefore, becomes imperative that its uniqueness must be well captured by an implementation of urban renewal projects guided by the law. Besides, it is expected that a Master Plan for the city will address various issues plaguing it. This will also include identifying and strengthening the roles of Akure in the socio – economic development matrix of Ondo State, and indeed in the south west geo-political region of the country.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study is more of observatory study. The available urban and regional planning laws were carefully studied in relation to urban renewal in Akure. The various urban renewal projects carried out in Akure between 2007 and 2012 were also identified and the profile of each project was gotten from the Ondo State Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development and was followed up by site survey to determine the compliance of the projects with the existing planning laws and standards. The photographs of these projects were taken to show their compliance with the regulations.

The information gotten from the Ministry were carefully analyzed with information gotten from site survey and compared with the provisions of the planning laws/regulations and the available literatures for the purpose of this study.

4.0 URBAN RENEWAL PROJECTS IN AKURE AND THEIR CONFORMITY WITH NIGERIAN URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING LAWS

Despite the socio-economic growth that was enhanced by developmental programmes, there are various urban renewal project carried in Akure in the last five years. These were view from their inventory and conformity with planning laws and regulations. The projects undertaken include the following:

4.1 Upgrading and Construction of Health Infrastructure: The economics of healthcare planning can either make or break the health sector. Building a new hospital may be the more expensive route, but it may dramatically improve the efficiency and quality of health care over time. Health care program is defined as any governmental, commercial, private or other organization that reimburses the Hospital for services provided to its patients (Ondo State Ministry of Health, 2012). This is adopted by the government of Ondo State to develop the health sector. The Plan is designed to establish a culture within the Hospital that promotes prevention, detection

and resolution of instances of conduct that do not conform to applicable Federal and State laws governing health care programs and to the Hospital's business and ethical policies. The construction and renewal of these facilities is a joint effort of both government and international agencies. The Hospital has developed guidelines to comply with the laws, regulations and guidelines for health care programs. While the contents in this Plan are intended to set forth those compliance guidelines that pertain to health care programs, as well as to ethical behavior, the Hospital expects each Party to always strive to obey government laws and regulations.

The newly constructed health facilities in Akure are tagged / named "mother and child", popularly called *Abiye*. The project was inaugurated on February 28, 2010 with the construction wiz backup with the funding of World Bank. The concept of mother and child is established to provide specialize medical care to the highly vulnerable group of pregnant women and children and consequently achieve a zero per cent mortality rate for mothers and children between ages zero to five. The facility is designed to promote preventive, restorative and rehabilitative health centre for women and children. It was later affirmed that adequate allocation had been made for the building and equipping of two additional mother and child hospital in the 2012 budget that was to be implemented by the Ondo State administration and the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) Board (Ondo State Ministry of Health, 2012). Findings revealed that there are nine health facilities in the Akure town that was upgraded or built through the urban renewal programmes of the State government with four of such health facilities in Akure South Local government. These are located at Oke Aro, Isolo, Shagari Village and Orita Obele Area.



Plate 1: The Newly Constructed Mother and Child Hospital, Oke Aro (L) and Health Maternity in Orita Obele

Source: Authors' Field Survey, 2012

Category	Location	Compliance with URP Laws
Refurbished	Isolo Comprehensive Healthcare	Inadequate setback, poor parking space and non conformity with adjoining land use
Newly Constructed	Orita Obele Clinic, Ijare Road Juction	Adequate parking and setback
Upgraded	Akure South Local Government Maternity Centre	Inadequate setback, poor parking space
Newly Constructed	Mother and Child Hospital, Oke Aro.	Adequate parking and setback with beautiful landscape design

Source: Authors' Field Survey, 2012



Plate 2: The Upgraded Maternity Center in Akure South Local Govt. (L) and Upgraded Comprehensive Health Center in Isolo (R)

Source: Authors' Field Survey, 2012

In compliance with urban and regional planning law, most of these facilities have variation in their levels of compliance. In all the facilities, the newly constructed ones adequately observed the planning regulations of setbacks and buildable space with ample car parking space, while the refurbished and upgraded one were left with existing little space with no room for expansion.

4.2 Upgrading and Construction of Market Infrastructure: Market, being an economic hub of any country is vital to the development of a nation. The government of Ondo State in the last decade has embarked on massive reconstruction and development of market infrastructure that cut across every part of the state. These are visible in both urban and rural area of the state. In Akure, five (5) markets have benefitted from renovation, upgrading and reconstruction. These markets are; NEPA Market, Oba Afunbiowo Market, Isolo Market, Isinkan Neighbourhood Market and Erekesan Market popularly called "Oja Oba". Renewal activities carried out in the markets are as follow:

Market	Type of Renewal	Stage of Construction	Compliance with URP Laws
NEPA	Reconstruction	Under Construction	The Parking Space is inadequate compare to the recommended standard of lettable space
Oba Afunbiowo	Relocation	Completed	The Space standard of the stalls are inadequate with few parking space and air spaces. The location is densely populated and make the location of the market inappropriate
Isolo	Relocation	Completed	Located in a congested area with no parking space and inadequate facilities that could support market operations
Isinkan	Reconstruction	Phase I Completed, Phase II Under Construction	Good Location with good regards to planning standards of ample space for parking and adequate facilities

Table 2: Market Infrastructure and their Compliance with Planning Standards

Source: Authors' Field Survey, 2012

The level of compliance varies from one location to the other. The market with adequate compliance with planning laws and regulations is Isinkan Market while others have little or no regard for the laws in their implementation. The market with the least compliance with regulations is Isolo market, though the location is perfect but the market did constitute nuisance to the surrounding neighbourhood due to absence of basic facilities like waste disposal area, drainage, fencing among others.

4.3 Upgrading and Construction of Roads and Road Infrastructure: Road being major economic development of a place, the administration of Ondo State Government embarks on the construction and upgrading of roads and their infrastructure in Akure. Every part of the area is covered with this activities and each area has fair share in road rehabilitation and construction. These road infrastructure renewed by the government in Akure include; Street lighting along Oba Adesida Road, Oyemekun Road and Oba Ile Road, all in

Akure. The government also constructed Bus Stop sheds along major road in the metropolis. The bus stop sheds generally have an approximate length of 8.7 meters and breadth of 2.4 meters. They are located close to every functional land uses. They are constructed with metallic materials with polymerizing vinyl chloride. It is curved at the roof and painted with the orange, yellow and white colors which are the colours of Ondo state.

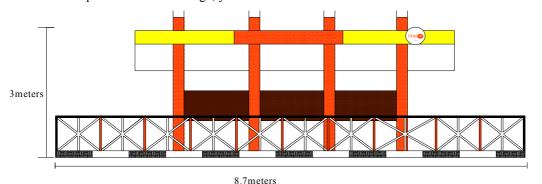


Figure 1: Front View of a Typical Bus Stop Shed in Akure Source: Adapted from Authors' Field Survey, 2012

Apart from these road infrastructures, new car parking spaces are also constructed, some of these are ongoing along major roads and the core area of the town. These car parks were laid out in accordance with car planning regulations. Though the car park did not measure up to the number of car users in the city.

In terms of compliance with Planning laws and regulation, most of the upgraded road measured up to the standard specify for access and collector roads of 12m and 18m respectively. The major planning problem with these roads is the presence of on-street parking noticeable in most of the streets renovated.

5.0 OTHER DEVELOPMENTAL PROJECTS

Apart from the aforementioned projects, there are other urban renewal projects that were carried out in Akure between 2007 till 2012. These include;

5.1 Construction of Auto Mart: This was to serve the auto dealers and remove the problem of on street parking and congestion along major roads in Akure due to activities of the auto dealers. The Automart is situated along Ilesha-Owo express road, passing through Akure metropolis. It is situated at the outskirt of Akure metropolis, some distance from the central business district (CBD). The project is a physical development project that is aimed at eradicating the indiscriminate packing and sales of vehicles along the main road of the town. It is aimed at achieving the agglomeration of motor dealers into a confined area to bring about a unified selling of motors in a confined and designated area. The Automart is code named The Caring Heart International Automart with a landmass and capacity to accommodate vehicles, the Akure facility compares with the Berger Market Ilesha-Benin Expressway. Where the distinctive difference lies, however, is that whereas disorderliness rules in the latter, modernity and orderliness hold sway in the former. The automart covers a land area of 3.42 hectares with a width of 112m, length of 305.4m. It is adequately accessible, it is along the federal road which is a major road and it is encircled with a local access road behind, and on both sides, a standard 30m setback is observed on the main road which is a federal and 6m setback on the local access road which is beside the automart. It is supplied with an in-gate at the east wing and out-gate at the west wing. However, the Automart (being the only automart available in Akure) is majorly in-line with planning regulations for physical developments. It has the required 30m setback for development along major roads (expressway); it is served by an expressway and local access road to compliment. It is provided with the major required facilities, such water, landscape, green area, toilet facilities, adequate entrance and exit routes, that is expected of any major physical development, water drainage channels and security provisions. It is also in harmony with land uses in its vicinity.



Plate 3: The Newly constructed Automart (L) and the new Mechanic Village (R) with adequate setback and air space

Source: Authors' Field Survey, 2012

5.2 Construction of Auto Mechanic Village: Auto Mechanic village is a way of stopping the activities of the auto mechanics along the streets but in a way that would have little or no avdverse effect on the operations. The mechanics are in the habit of converting abandoned, open spaces and indeed any available space into their workshops, with the attendant littering of the environment with disused vehicles. The use of automobile vehicles on our roads plays a key role in road transportation system. In Nigeria, where land transportation is largely in use compared to water transportation and other modes of transportation, the use of automobile vehicles, either diesel or petrol driven is predominant. The mechanic village is located in a Government residential area along Ondo road, in Akure South Local Government Area of Ondo State, Nigeria. The mechanic Village is sited on 1.3 hectares parcel of land. The blocks are numbered A-L, the mechanic village is designed for 172 cars. Specifically, the Mechanic Village is made up of 86 shops. Each cubicle has ramps, pits and an area designated for an office or changing room. There is also a section for panel beating. The total mechanic village can serve part of the town. The mechanic village has a good compliance with planning regulation of air space, parking space, set back and accessibility.

5.3 City Branding: This involves the beautification activities carried out in the metropolis to give the city a sense of place. Presently, the State Government channel all development towards rehabilitation and upgrading, new innovations and developments have been brought in and new projects have been inaugurated. Moreso, there has been several landscaping projects that were carried out to beautify the state. These include; construction of beautiful walkways, landscaping of open spaces, gardens and planting of trees. The Ondo State Government in 2009 designed a new logo to rebrand the state and these was transcend to the beautifications that was carried out in Akure. This aspect of beautification is to rebrand the State capital and as well domiciled the urban renewal projects carried out in the metropolis.

5.4 Construction and Redevelopment of Schools: In order to improve the educational sector of Akure and enhance the development of school infrastructure, the government embarked on construction and renovation of classrooms and offices of schools in Akure. These school include; Aquinas College, Oyemekun Grammar School, African Church Grammar School, Fiwasaye Girls Grammar School and Ijapo High School. At the primary school level, the government embarks on the construction of multiple class rooms tagged "*Mega School*" in Okejebu and Irowo Quarters. These schools have various degree of compliance with planning regulations. Some were constructed with adequate setback and observed regulations; some were constructed with little considerations for planning regulations. The rate of compliance with planning laws is given below.

School	Location	Type of Renewal	Compliance with URP Laws
Aquinas College	Osinle	Construction of new classroom and renovation of existing ones and Construction of new Multipurpose Hall	Poor Space Management in term of setback and air spaces, ample space for parking
Oyemekun Grammar School	Oyemekun	Construction of new Health Center and Classroom	The set back are inadequate and the form of development is not constant
African Church Grammar School	Alagbaka	Construction of new staff offices	Poor Space Management in term of setback and air spaces, ample space for parking
Fiwasaye Girls Grammar School	Alagbaka	Upgrading	Good Location with good regards to planning standards of ample space for parking and adequate facilities
Ijapo High School	Ijapo Estate	Construction of new classroom and renovations of the dilapidated ones.	Poor location of structure good setback and air space among building. There is provision for car park with regards to regulation
Mega Primary School I	Oke-Ijebu	Newly Constructed (Classroom and Staff Offices)	Well located with adequate setback and parking space
Mega Primary School II	Irowo Quarters	Newly Constructed (Classroom and Staff Offices)	Standards for building plan were well maintained with adequate air space

Source: Authors' Field Survey, 2012

6.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

The purpose of laws and legislations is to keep abreast with the rule of law and urban governance initiatives and to contribute to strengthening the political and administrative framework of a nation, in line with the principles of democracy, transparency, accountability, integrity, respect for human rights, and promotion of the rule of law. Ondo State Government must ensure good governance in the management of urban renewal projects in the state. This is due to the fact that good governance is an essential ingredient for any planned city and civilized environment with regards to planning laws and legislation maintained in urban renewal project in city centers. Nigeria is presently grappling with the challenges of building a sustainable democracy and consolidating it as a means of governance. It must build credible, political institutions worthy of sustaining our cities and allowing democratic values to deepen in such a way that the rule of law and due process will replace the arbitrariness and rule of force, which have taken deep roots in the country over decades of misrule. There is no doubt that the future of the country's fledging democracy and urban governance will depend largely on the extent to which both the leaders and the people are able to place themselves under a regime of human rights and disciplined governance, as opposed to the regime of lawlessness and graft.

The main planning impact of any urban renewal projects is for the sustenance of the project and for the reservation areas to be adequately planned for, the roads having ample setbacks with trees-lined avenues and long straight roads while the nature areas should be characterized with well planned urban land use development. This is to ensure that crowded areas that were covered by buildings and narrow streets could be improved.

Maintaining urban and regional planning laws remained the best way to ensure the sustenance of any developmental projects. It is to also serves as a yard stick for every citizenry to ensure that their environment develop in a manner that is devoid of slum development and ensure safety of their life and for sustaining the city for both present and future use. Governments and policy makers need to pay more attention to issue of enforcement of current physical planning laws and regulations from their side and ensure that laws in the country are updated to serve the current trend of urbanization in the world.

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