

Review

Physical planning administration in Nigeria: Abia State experience

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Man from creation was endowed by nature with the ability of physical planning qualities. From the onset, man was able to organize and order his settlements to provide food and shelter and equally to trade among other benefits. These rudimentary influences that shaped settlements in the early times were later overwhelmed by the backlash effects of growth in population, sprawling and ribbon developments and poor environmental sanitation. This spontaneously called for the need for conscious space ordering and control through physical planning. In this paper, a chronicle of various processes of physical planning administration in Abia State, the progress made so far, difficulties encountered and the defaults associated with the processes is examined. Recommendations were also advanced to highlight the way forward in the effective physical planning administration in Abia State.

Key words: Physical Planning Administration, Organogram, LUAC and LAAC.

INTRODUCTION

Man had the innate abilities to plan. The art of planning was imbued in him by nature. Right from the beginning of times, God created land, water, air and all that are in them and finally created man with a definite responsibility to superintend over the activities that take place in His creation. The history of physical planning could be traced to man as he arranged his settlement orderly and conveniently around the traditional rulers' palaces and worship places. Common rallying centres were maintained for meetings and decision making. Over time, man initiated settlements along the roads, trade and market routes. Early enough, he imbibed the tenets of local customs and practices which culminated in the traditional land tenure system. This engendered land ownership and expansive

developments that spontaneously generated the common responsibility for development control of their settlements and communities.

This is perhaps one of the primary factors that gave rise to legislations that informed physical planning administration in Nigeria. The evolutionary trend of physical planning in Nigeria started with the Lagos Town Improvement Ordinance of 1863 to control poor sanitation and development in Lagos, followed by the 1917 Township Ordinance which expanded its horizon to entire Nigeria. Then came the Nigerian Town and Country Planning Ordinance of 1946 that reeled off the processes of a wide-range of physical planning activities (Oyesiku, 2004). This retained a tailor-made regional derivative of

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the ordinance for the North, East and West. In 1992, physical planning in Nigeria had grown into sophistication.

Accordingly, a more expansive indigenous Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law CAP 88 of 1992 was enacted and was further amended as Decree No.18, of 1999. This law was robustly couched to assign responsibilities to the three tiers of administration in Nigeria, classified as the Commission for the Federal, Board for State and Authority for Local Government Areas. Abia State proactively rested on this national law and enacted the Abia State Planning Board and Planning Authority law CAP 38 vol. II, 1999-2000. This law formed the basis for the public notice of March 7, 2006 that reorganized and gave more impetus to physical planning administration in Abia State. This Public Notice in line with CAP 38 increased the number of Town Planning Authorities in the State from eight to fifteen. By this reorganization, Town Planning Authorities assumed full responsibility for the supervision of town planning matters in Abia State. At this time the two remaining Local Governments and the part of Ikwuano LGA that is contiguous to the Capital Territory were still being controlled by Umuahia Capital Development Authority. The enactment of Abia State Planning Board and Planning Authority Law CAP 38 leveraged the advancement of physical planning administration in Abia State.

Agbola (2007) conceptualized physical planning as an activity which is concerned with the guidance and control of systemic change within the physical environment. Further, he noted that in practice, physical planning comprises the formulation of plans and policies for the anticipated changes in the physical environment that are considered desirable and necessary and also those that should be prevented.

Falade (2003) lent credence to this assertion by positing that physical planning entailed putting in place a system of controls either to allow for those changes which are in accordance with plans and policies or to prevent those that are not, from taking place.

Alabi and Akinbode (2010) emphasized that physical planning is concerned with the design, growth and management of the physical environment in accordance with a predestined guide and policies. They further noted that the goal of physical planning is to make provision for the coordination of all forms of development activities at the national, regional and local level.

In other words, physical planning is designed to regulate the activities in the environment with the aid of defined plans and proposal for the purposes of achieving the present and future orderliness, congruence, and harmony. In essence, this calls for purposeful administration of physical planning practices in our settlements, communities and environment at large.

According to the New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary (2010), the word administration succinctly means management of public affairs. The conception of public affairs in this context connotes an

aspect of administration which physical planning is conveying at the micro, semi-macro and macro levels; within the local, state and national realms. At the local level, it is for the preparation and administration of towns, rural area, local and subject plans; the state level for the generation and administration of regional, sub regional, urban, local and subject plans. At the national level, it is for the preparation and administration of national physical development, regional, sub-regional, urban and subject plans (The Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law Decree No. 88, 1992 and decree No. 18, 1999).

Consequently, Fadare (2004) stressed that the primary function of an administrative framework for planning is to control the use of land, and the character and arrangement of buildings so as to achieve and secure convenience and beauty. Accordingly, its purpose is to harmonize the human external and internal environment to invariably promote healthful and comfortable living.

BRIEF HISTORY OF PHYSICAL PLANNING ADMINISTRATION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND NIGERIA

United Kingdom (UK) has a planning system that is responsible for town and country planning devolved to the Welsh Assembly, the Scottish Parliament and the Northern Inland administration. The roots of the UK town and country planning system created in the post-war years lie in concerns developed over pollution, urban sprawl and ribbon developments. These were the offshoots of industrialization and urbanization of the 1940 (Department of the Environment, 1988a; Ekop, 2007).

The major framework for physical planning in UK was set in the Town and Country Planning Act, 1947 which essentially had remained the same till date. This centralized system of physical planning was variously criticized by Corkindale (2004) because of its slow speed and lack of predictability of planning decisions and Barker (2006) on the grounds of its high costs.

According to Kayden (2000), United States of America (USA) country-specific blend of constitutional, historical, cultural and economic ingredients favour local physical planning system. The relative dominance of private property ownership, private market ideology and private sector economy foster a strong opposition to centralized physical planning administration in USA. Consequently, physical planning system in USA is tied to zoning and subdivision regulation.

As a colony of UK, Physical Planning in Nigeria initially towed the centralized planning practices of the British as enunciated in the 1946 ordinance. However, the enactment of Decree 88 of 1992 as amended in Decree 18 of 1999 conceived planning as practised in USA. This is the decentralization of physical Planning in Nigeria with emphasis on the Planning Authorities that favours bottom-top approach.

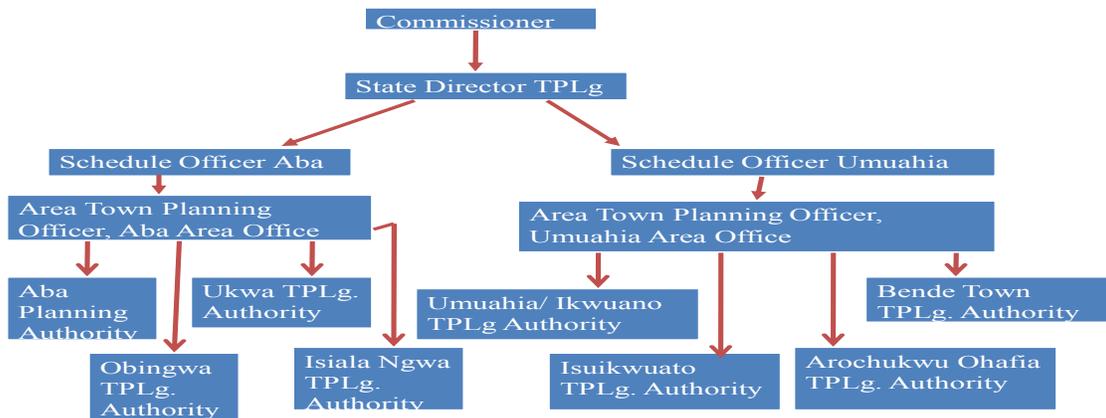


Figure 1. Organogram showing physical planning administration at the creation of Abia State. **Source:** Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban renewal, 2014.

In Nigeria, the Lagos Town Improvement Ordinance of 1863 was essentially the first planning related legislation. The promulgation of this ordinance by the colonialist was informed by the poor state of sanitation in Lagos. It was with a view to control development and poor urban sanitation in this environment. However, the entrenchment of physical planning in Nigeria by the colonialist climaxed with the enactment of the Nigerian Town and Country Planning Ordinance of 1946. This was the period Nigeria was politically partitioned into three quasi-autonomous administrative regions referred to as the North, East and West. As such, this ordinance reordered the planning, re-planning, improvement and development of different parts of the country. The 1946 ordinance covered diverse areas of physical planning activities. Such areas are: Planning Schemes, Execution of Schemes, Acquisition and disposal of land for scheme as well as compensation and betterment. Other areas are the legal procedures for the operations of schemes and financial matters for successful implementation of the schemes.

The major interest of this ordinance was improvement and development control through planning schemes prepared by the Planning Authorities appointed by the Governor-General. The ordinance remained the operative physical planning law in 1960 when Nigeria became an independent and up to 1992 when the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Act, No.88 was promulgated. This 1946 ordinance was the first legislative document that provided an all-embracing guidance and focus for the administration of physical planning activities in Nigeria. At independence, the 1946 Town and Country Planning Ordinance was retained as Town and Country Planning Laws, Chapter 123 of the laws of Western Nigeria, Chapter 130 of the laws of Northern Nigeria and Chapter 126 of the laws of Eastern Nigeria. The regional variation of the ordinance introduced variegated approaches to physical planning problems in the three regions due to

increased urbanization experienced in Nigeria soon after independence. This invariably created a set back on the overall development of Nigeria at large.

Physical planning administration at the creation of Abia State

Abia State inherited Aba and Umuahia Area Town Planning Offices from Imo State at its creation by the Federal Government of Nigeria on 27th August, 1991. Aba Area Town Planning Office (ATPO) was controlling Aba Planning Authority, Ukwa Town Planning Authority, Obioma Ngwa Town Planning Authority and Isiala Ngwa Town Planning Authority. Umuahia Area Town Planning Office (ATPO) was in charge of Ikwuano/Umuahia Town Planning Authority, Bende Town Planning Authority, Isuikwuato Town Planning Authority (formerly Isuikwuato/Okigwe in Imo State) and Arochukwu/Ohafia Town Planning Authority. The Area Town Planning Officers supervising Aba and Umuahia Area Town Planning Offices had their offices in Aba and Umuahia from where they intermittently visit the Town Planning Authorities in their jurisdiction. Figure 1 shows that a total of eight Town Planning Authorities existed then, made up of four under Aba Area Office and four also under the control of Umuahia Area Office.

However, the ATPOs generally depended on the reports of field activities submitted to them by the field workers deployed in these Planning Authorities. The Schedule Officers at the headquarters (ministry) supervise the activities of the Area Town Planning Officers by scrutinizing their monthly situation reports, financial returns and other submissions. Thereafter, the reports are presented to the Director of Town Planning who in turn report to the Commissioner responsible for the Ministry of Lands, Survey and Urban Development.

At this material time, the main activities performed by

the Town Planning Authorities were development control, collection and processing of building plans. The Area Town Planning Officer forwards the processed plans for approval by the Chairman of Local Government Areas where the Town Planning Authority covered. Design of layouts, framing of planning scheme, opening and grading of roads in the layouts, were functions jointly performed by Planning Authorities and the Ministry.

NIGERIAN URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING LAW NO. 88 OF 1992 AND CREATION OF ABIA STATE

This law was expected to reinvigorate and reengineer physical planning administration and practice in Nigeria, because, for the first time, defined and specific physical planning responsibilities were assigned to the Federal, State and Local Governments of Nigeria. The Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law Decree No. 88 of 1992 has had some of its sections amended by the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law Decree No. 18, 1999. Such sections are 6, 8, 10, 86, 87, 91 and the insertion of sections 6A and 89A and a new schedule. The essence of this amendment is to ensure effective functioning of the Commission as established in the Decree by dissolving the Urban and Regional Planning Division of the Federal Ministry of Works and Housing (The Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law Decree No. 18, 1999 (Amendment)). The Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Act No 88 which repealed the forty-six year old and outlandish Town and Country Planning Ordinance of 1946, was promulgated on 15th December 1992 about a year and four months after the creation of Abia State. This law was actually the first post-independent planning law that tried to address the shortcomings associated with the form of physical planning administration informed by the 1946 Town and Country Planning Ordinance. Its content is a drastic overhaul of the administration of Urban and Regional Planning in Nigeria. Some of the salient elements of Law 88 which were not contained in the 1946 Town and Country Planning Ordinance are that the: National Urban and Regional Planning Commission was established to perform planning functions at the Federal level, State Urban and Regional Planning Board was established for all states in Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory Abuja, while Local Planning Authority was established for the Local Government to perform planning functions at this level of physical planning administration. Most importantly, the provision in the law for the establishment of a Tribunal gave tremendous fillip to the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning law.

However, the National approach of this law contradicts the provision of section 40f of the 1999 Constitution which classified urban and regional planning as well as physical development as a residual matter within the exclusive legislative and executive competence of the State. In a Legal suit filed by Lagos State against the Federal Government and 35 other States, the Supreme Court

granted five of seven reliefs sought by the plaintiff (Lagos State) and also nullified several provisions of the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law. This Supreme Court judgment of 13th June 2003 declared that Urban and Regional Planning is constitutionally recognized as the responsibility of the state Government rather than that of Federal or local Government (Federal Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2004). This judgment is a major setback on physical planning administration in Nigeria as it created a lacuna between the Federal and State as well as between the State and Local Governments in planning matters.

Abia State Urban and Regional Planning Board and Planning Authority Law CAP 38, Vol. II 1999-2000 (Abia State Experience)

Although the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law No. 88 of 1992 had repealed the Town and Country Planning Ordinance of 1946, its Eastern Nigeria derivative, Town and Country Planning Law CAP 126, of 1963 was still being cited and used for physical planning administration and decision in Abia State until the promulgation of Abia State Urban and Regional Planning Board and Planning Authority Law CAP 38 Vol. II, 1999-2000.

The provision of Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law No. 88 meant that every state of the Federation was expected to frame their State laws in consonance with the prevailing state physical planning administration. This has to suit their state physical planning operations, but in tandem with the general framework of the sections of law No 88 dealing with state and local governments.

Abia State Urban and Regional Planning Board and Planning Authority law CAP 38 Vol.II 1999-2000 was signed into law on 28th of May, 1999. Abia State was among the first three states that achieved this feat. Accordingly, the law outlined the responsibilities of the State and Local Governments. It also specified the composition of the Board and Authority and their respective functions. This law clearly states the various departments in the Board and Authority as follows:

Physical Planning and Implementation, Urban Renewal/Upgrading/New Towns Development, Development Control, Administration and Legal, as well as Accounts

The law provided among others that the departments shall be responsible to the Executive Director or the Executive Secretary, as the case may be. The foregoing shows that CAP 38 is very comprehensive and lofty in so many respects. It made the whole of Abia State a planning area and provided the impetus for the establishment of Town Planning Authorities in all the Local Government Areas of Abia State. At present, there are 15 Town

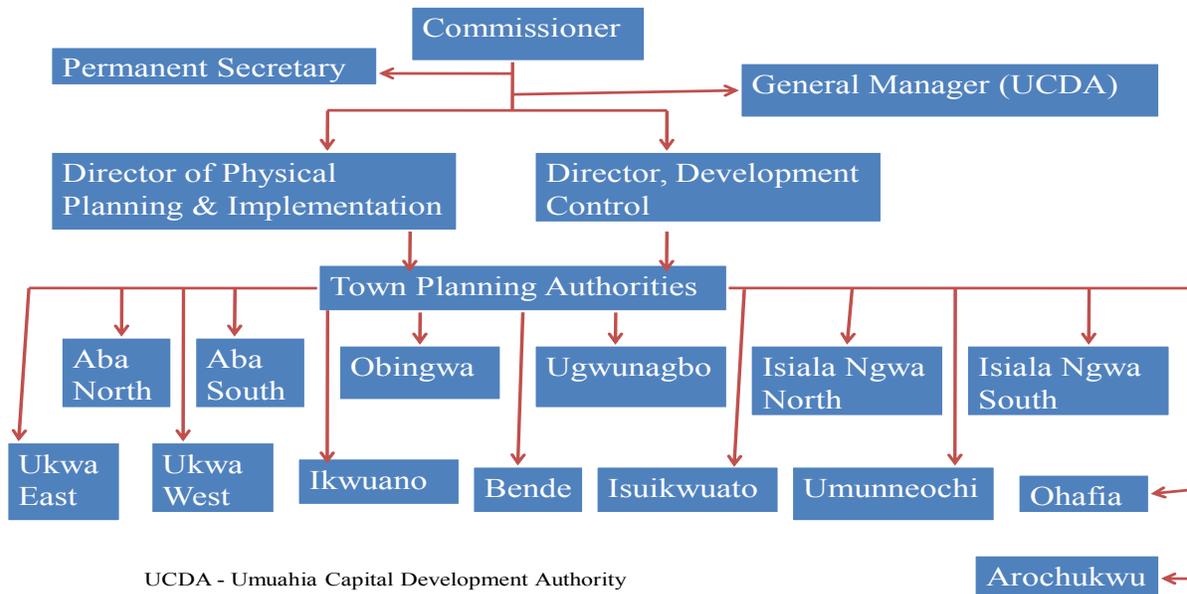


Figure 2. Organogram showing newly created town planning authorities in Abia State. **Source:** Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Renewal, 2014.

Planning Authorities functioning in 15 Local Government Areas in Abia State.

They are: Aba North, Aba South, Obingwa, Osisioma, Ugwunagbo, Ukwa East, Ukwa West, Isiala Ngwa North, Isiala Ngwa South, Ohafia, Arochukwu, Umunneochi, Isuikwuato, Ikwuano and Bende (Figure 2).

Umuahia Capital Development Authority, the 16th Town Planning Authority, covers Umuahia North and South Local Government Areas as well as part of Ikwuano Local Government Area up to a community called Ngoro. Notwithstanding the good points in favour of CAP 38, it has been discovered that it did not abrogate/repeal Umuahia Capital Development Authority law No 8 of 1992, an older law, during its promulgation. This presupposes that CAP 38 and law No8 are used contemporaneously to deal with physical planning matters that ensue in the Capital Territory. The question is, which of the laws will take precedence?

Furthermore, CAP 38 provides for the establishment of the Board at the state level to be at the apex of physical planning administration in Abia State and dispensing physical planning matters through the five departments earlier enumerated. Up till date, the State Board has not been constituted but virtually all the Departments except the Department of Urban Renewal/Upgrading /New Towns Development have been fully established in terms of functional responsibilities. These Departments are currently operating under the aegis of Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Renewal contrary to the provisions of CAP 38. In like manner, the Authority was only constituted in 2007 and 2008, thereafter the general policy that should guide the operations of the Authority (the board's function), and the day-to-day management of

the Authority were determined and executed by the Executive and Acting Executive Secretaries. Thus the Ministry through its Development Control Department now supervises the Town Planning Authorities. Even at that, officers at the Headquarters usurp some of the primary functions of the Town Planning Authorities in visiting and inspecting sites without reference to the Executive Secretary in charge of the area. They also conceptualize, initiate and nurture schemes, as well as venturing upon development control activities without the necessary protocol. The essence of creating Town Planning Authorities at the Local Government (grass root) levels with the enabling laws was to ensure a bottom-top approach to physical planning practices. The Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning law and Abia State Planning Board and Planning Authorities law also elucidated the relevance of bottom-top approach to planning. Consequently, Physical Planning practices in Abia State should not only respect the spirit of the laws but also the letters of the laws.

Town Planning Authorities Public Notices

Some efforts were made to create more Town Planning Authorities particularly from the old ones that were composed of two or more Local Government areas. This was not easily achieved as the attempt only succeeded in floating mere information offices or outpost still tied to the whims and caprices of their parent Town Planning Authorities. This State of affairs necessitated the raising of Public Notices that were all gazette for the 15 Town Planning Authorities on 7th March 2006. This exercise was

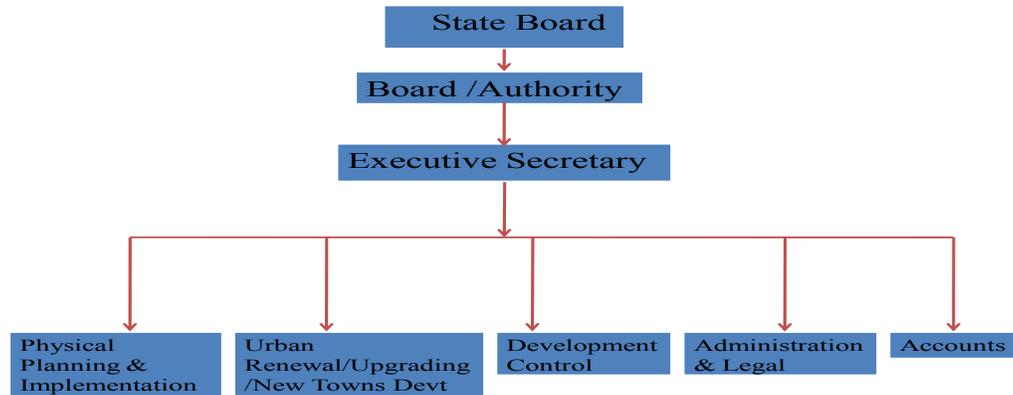


Figure 3. Abridged Organogram of the Town Planning Authority. **Source:** CAP 38, 1999 – 2000.

a Landmark achievement by the then Department of Urban Planning as it gave autonomy and legal statuses to the Town Planning Authorities.

This exercise decentralized physical planning administration in Abia State and made the administrative chain of command and communication simple and effective. In line with CAP 38, Town Planners became the official Heads of Town Planning Authorities instead of the Chairmen of Local Government Councils and politicians. Provision was made for the employment of other professionals such as Builders, Environmental Health Officers, Architects, Civil Engineers, Accountants in the Town Planning Authorities. The offices of the Schedule Officers (Aba and Umuahia) and Area Town Planning Officers (Aba and Umuahia) were scrapped. In the present dispensation, the Executive Secretary doubles as the Area Town Planning Officer responsible to the State Director of Physical Planning and Implementation. This is with particular reference to Area Office matters. The Executive Secretaries are however responsible to the Director, Development Control with respect to development control matters. Figure 2 shows the total number of Town Planning Authorities created by the Public Notice of 2006. The implication is that seven additional authorities representing approximately 88 percent were created.

However, whether the performance of Town Planning Authorities has been commensurate with the genuine and spirited efforts made to stimulate and improve physical planning administration and planning practices in Abia State is a big question staring in our faces. However, experiences discussed below unveiled vivid status report of physical planning practices in Abia State.

Aberrations in Physical Planning Administration and Practices in Abia State

The journey so far has not been easy. It was tedious, rigorous and all the more arduous and tiresome.

Notwithstanding, the promulgation of CAP 38 was a fulfilled dream of town planners in the ministry and the Abia State chapter of Nigerian Institute Of Town Planners (NITP). However, there are some hiccoughs that tend to militate against the speed required to attain the optimum progress in Abia State Physical Planning Administration. These clogs are wide and diverse. They include but not limited to:

INTRODUCTION OF HEAD OF OPERATIONS IN THE ORGANOGRAM OF TOWN PLANNING AUTHORITY

This introduction is not only anomalous but extraneous and illegal. In Figure 3, there is a chain of authority as prescribed by CAP 38. This Organogram shows that at the Town Planning Authority level all Departments are responsible to the Executive Secretary. In Figure 4, there is a depiction of distortion in the Organogram by the introduction of Head of Operations. According to this Organogram, all the Departments in the Town Planning Authority are responsible to the Head of Operations, who by this description acts as the cleaning house and mouth-piece of the various Departments to the Executive Secretary.

This is an unfortunate illegal act and an imposition introduced in 2012 that has been found to be selfish and diversionary to the actual intention of ensuring proper physical planning practices in Abia State. This office is breeding bad blood in the rank and file of staff of Town Planning Authorities. The Head of operations now have an undue advantage over other colleagues and professionals of same ranks. This is because, the head of Operations assumes an unnecessary position of the first-among-equals and generally lords it over other colleagues. The position of the Head of Operations has been criticized extensively by town planning practitioners in Abia State especially on the grounds of illegality. However, it seems that the protagonists of such a position are adamant and undaunted because of the

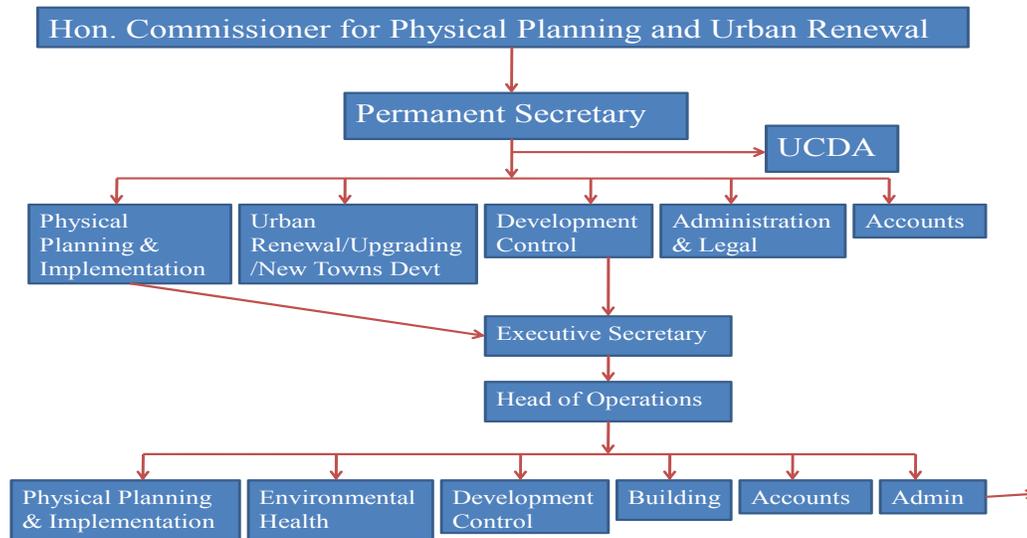


Figure 4. Distortion in the Organogram of Town Planning Authority. Source: Town Planning Authorities in Abia State, 2014.

benefit in terms of gossips and town planning jobs they derived from the head of operations.

Lack of professional staff

By virtue of the prescription of CAP 38, Town Planning Authorities in the State should employ on a conservative scale 45 Professional Town Planners. This number does not include the Town Planning Staff of UCDA. The dearth of professional Town Planners in the Authorities is affecting the administration of physical planning in Abia State. Currently, there are 26 Registered Town Planners in Town Planning Authorities. Whereas in five Town Planning Authorities such as Aba North, Isiala Ngwa North and South, Bende and Ikwano there are no Registered Town Planners.

Movement of physical planning department from one ministry to the other

A particular experience that has apparently destabilized physical planning administration in Abia State and its relevance in the scheme of things is its transitory movements from one ministry to the other. The centre or hub of Physical Planning Administration in Abia State, former Department of Urban Planning – started its journey as a Bureau in the Ministry of Works in 1992. Later it was established as a Department of Urban Planning in the Ministry of Lands, Survey and Urban Planning. Thereafter, it became a department in the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and later returned to the Ministry of Lands, Survey and Urban Planning. Sometime in August 2010, it was carved out

from the Ministry of Lands, Survey and Urban Development as the Ministry of Urban Renewal. This Ministry was eventually rechristened the Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Renewal. This various movement has gravely impinged negatively on the foundation and stability of physical planning administration in Abia State.

Non implementation of master plans, structure plans and elimination of Land Use and Allocation Committee (LUAC) and Land Advisory and Allocation Committee (LAAC) from land use decisions

The major features of the old master Plan for Umuahia prepared by G and G International were not implemented even though it was completed in 1984 seven years before Abia State was created. This is with particular reference to the Ring Road provided in the Master Plan. It was meant to divert traffic that traverses the City Capital away from it and reduce pressure and congestion on the city internal roads. Most unfortunately, there is no master plan for the capital territory up till date. The growth point plans and structure plans inherited from Imo state were not seriously considered as veritable documents that should guide physical planning activities. These documents were stock of the shelves, seldom referred to by officers for the determination of land uses in the affected areas. This made the urban and rural areas as designated by these plans to be hardly distinguishable even at present. This disappointing and dangerous phenomenon was accentuated by the elimination of LUAC and LAAC in the determination of land uses in urban area and rural environments. This has encouraged the tacit and unregulated use of direct application, that does not include adequate scrutiny and

input on certificate of occupancy (C of O) application from town planning point of view. The negative implication of this is that non-compatible and non-conforming uses are found littered in the environment. At times applications for C of O are granted for sites on the roads, open spaces, conserved, preserved areas, and uses contrary to the designation of existing scheme.

Creation of town planning department in the ministry of lands and survey

The establishment of a town planning unit in the Ministry of lands and Survey at the end of February, 2012 has further denied the Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Renewal one of its statutory functions. Department of Physical Planning and Implementation is by law responsible for physical planning and land use matters. Contrarily, the Ministry of Lands and Survey now supervises the town planning unit and without the requisite education and professional training unilaterally offer unqualified advice that is relied upon in granting approval on land use matters.

The excesses of the Ministry of Lands and Survey are now a big threat to the existence of the Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Renewal. They have without qualms continuously embarked upon the balkanization and mutilation of existing layouts, created and carved out plots and allocating such to the public without holistic redesign of layouts. Sometimes, the Ministry of Lands and Survey recruit quacks and unprofessional surveyors and inexperienced town planners who do not exhibit any sense of responsibility in the built environment to redesign and tinker layouts.

The former Project Implementation Unit (PIU), now Abia State Estate Development Agency (ABSEDA) does not also help matters. They create mushroom layouts that do not have concepts and standards. These layouts are not subjected to the review of the Department of Physical atmosphere, for the benefit of stake-holders within the ambit of the enabling laws. The increase in the number of Town Planning Authorities from eight to fifteen is a boost on the physical planning administration in Abia State. It is an enviable achievement that should generate a multiplier effect not only in terms of employment of staff but in terms of efficient and prompt service delivery.

Consequently, there is the ardent need to address and right all the aberrations noted in this paper and more, for the overall progress and better functioning of physical planning administration in Abia State.

RECOMMENDATION

The problems raised in this paper may have peculiar shades and colorations in other states in Nigeria. They are however highlighted to reveal the main problems that

are bedeviling the progress of physical planning administration in Abia State. Up till date no reasonable attempts have been made to improve on them, rather physical planning administration is being plunged into more difficult dimensions. For instance, every issue on land is now being piloted by the Ministry of Lands and Survey in exclusion of the Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Renewal, the goose that should be laying the golden eggs.

Notwithstanding, it is recommended that the post of heads of operation be scrapped from the Organogram of the town planning authorities as it is not only extraneous but illegal. In addition, Abia State Planning Board and Planning Authority Law CAP 38, Vol. 2, 1999 – 2000 did not make any provision for such post. It is breeding bad blood and antagonism among the staff.

Although only one elected corporate member is newly registered professionally, many graduate members are warming up for the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners professional examinations this year. Accordingly, it is expected that the number of Registered Town Planners will increase as the years roll by. Therefore, all graduate and student members should be encouraged to regularly attend state chapter meetings and participate in all chapter activities. This will renew their interest and galvanize efforts necessary for the advancement of physical planning administration in Abia State.

In order to recover loss grounds in the functions of Town Planning Department and to engender fuller involvement of town planning in the scheme of things in Abia State, the town planning staff in the Ministry and those in the private sector should not rest on their oars. The private practitioners should particularly insist that town planners should at all times play the leading roles in all that involves land development and physical planning administration. This they will achieve through courtesy calls on government functionaries, advertisements and proclamations, through seminars and conferences as well as resorting to court actions to seek redress on extreme cases.

The issue of providing a master plan for Abia State has been highly belaboured without success. As a result, the Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Renewal should through the Town Planning Authorities which are still under their control embark on the preparation of structure plan and private layouts with written schemes. This essentially will control the sprawling and disorderly developments that are emerging in all the Old Urban area in Abia State.

The Town Planning Authorities should undertake tours and visits to the traditional rulers and leaders of thoughts in their areas of jurisdiction and educate them on the needs to order the land in their autonomous communities through the design of private layouts. Also, the discussion on the relevance of providing private layouts at various local government areas should be championed by the local government chairmen. The Executive Secretaries of

the Town Planning Authorities are well able to liaise with the Chairmen to create such awareness at the grass root levels.

All private layouts prepared should be approved with the accompanying written schemes and implemented accordingly. Dotted examples of properly articulated and implemented layouts will serve as awareness and eye openers to the public and encourage the framing of layout plans and schemes in their various localities.

The Land Use and Allocation Committee (LUAC) and Land Advisory and Allocation Committee (LAAC) should be re-established to review and take decisions on the application and approval of Statutory Certificate of Occupancies. This will stem the irregular recommendations and approvals done unilaterally by the Ministry of Lands and Survey and reorder the location of land uses at the recommended sites and appropriate designated locations.

The Town Planning Unit created at the Ministry of Lands and Survey is a rape to the functions of the Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Renewal. It is an evil wind that has blown physical planning administration in the state no good. This unit should be closed down and its functions and staff returned to the Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Renewal where it rightly belongs.

The Nigerian Institute of Town Planners Abia State Chapter has been doing a lot in town planning activities through meetings, discussions, and annual luncheons which are veritable and viable fora for education, interaction and dissemination of planning information to members and the public.

The Abia State Chapter should extend its frontiers and further interact and synergize with sister chapters in other states to benefit from novel planning issues they may have at their disposal. This will enhance physical planning administration in Abia State to a large extent and evoke an enduring imprint of new physical planning tenets on the activities of Abia State Chapter.

Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interest.

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