

The Effectiveness of Institutional Framework for The Implementation of the Greater Port Harcourt City Master Plan, Rivers State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The effectiveness of institutional framework for efficient implementation of Master Plans is the bane of spatial and territorial planning in Nigeria, thus, greatly contributory to the poor state of human settlements in Nigeria. This study examines the process of implementation of the Greater Port Harcourt City Development Master Plan in Rivers State, Nigeria from its inception in 2009 to 2019. The study specifically looks at the institutional framework put in place for the implementation of the master plan for the New City. The study engaged the qualitative research approach, both primary and secondary sources of data were utilized through direct observation, deductive-inductive reasoning, visits to project sites and conducted in-depth face-to-face interviews with key informants; staff and executive directors of the authority. The qualitative data were analysed using thematic and content analysis. The result showed that the institutional framework of the Greater Port Harcourt City Development Authority is weak to implement the master plan. The administrative structure of the Authority has been compromised by numerous forms of constraints such as staff deficit, unqualified staff and lack of appropriate working tools leading to a non-functional institution. The study recommends the hiring of staff with the requisite skills, motivated to carry out tasks, introduction of a rolling 2-5-year budget plan for all the existing and future equipment needed for plan preparation and implementation.

KEY WORDS- INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK, MASTER PLAN, IMPLEMENTATION

INTRODUCTION

Plans are the synthesis of the gamut of the aspirations and visions of stakeholders made into strategic policies, programs and projects documented (in text and graphics) for implementation by a government statutory agency(s) within a timeframe which is evaluated periodically. Plans are of different layers including but not limited to Master Plans. The tripod of planning is all important part of the actualization of the goal(s) of any plan, however, one of the fundamental aspects of achieving the goals as set out in a Master Plan for a specific spatial space is the implementation of such a plan by the established implementation agency. The implementation of a Master Plan which is the document (that contains public policy(s), programs and projects) is a major determinant of urban development and the government of the day has a major role to play. According to Keunta, (2010), Politics and public policy are the major factors that determine urban development.

Master Plan for urban development is one of the policy documents used to influence the growth of urban population, land use, infrastructure development and service provision. Implementation of the Master Plan determines the level of development of the geographical area it is meant to address. A Master Plan is usually designed for a specific period, between ten and thirty years.

It consists of an inventory of existing development in the geographic area of interest as well as proposals for future development.

The city of Port Harcourt is essentially a colonial creation. It has a long history and its development highlights to a large extent the introduction of various types of planning legislation in the country (Anyanwu, 1979; Cookey-gam,

2013). From the post-colonial period till date, various master plans have been prepared for the city. Between 1972 and 1975, a total of three master plans were prepared for Port Harcourt by foreign planning consultants. Nickson and Borys, a British planning consultant were engaged to prepare the redevelopment plan for Diobu and a new town in Borokiri – both parts of Port Harcourt. Specialists Konsult, a Swedish planning outfit prepared the master plan for the Greater Port Harcourt area. This was the Second Port Harcourt Master Plan, 1975 (Port Harcourt Master Plan, 1975; Cookey-gam, 2013).

To facilitate the implementation of the Port Harcourt Master Plan, the government created the Port Harcourt Metropolitan Planning Authority (PHMPA) to take effect in 1976 with the membership of 28 people drawn from the public services and industries. The Secretary of the Port Harcourt City Council was its Chairman. However, the Authority was never given the independence it needed to function properly and was administratively emasculated by being placed under the control of the Ministry of Lands and Housing. (Cookey-gam, 2013).

Ultimately, and sadly indeed, the plan was not really implemented and the net effect was that the fears of the consultants about unplanned and regulated growth actually became the dominant nature of development in Port Harcourt. Four principal factors have been identified as the root causes of this failure. Chief among them was the absence of appropriate institutional framework, while the others are; the dynamics of land ownership, struggles over land and non-implementation of the Port Harcourt master plan 1975. Thus, the once thriving garden city status, as Port Harcourt was popularly known, has eroded (Cookey-gam, 2013; Nwokaeze & Dawaye, 2020).

Eventually, the Port Harcourt Master Plan 1975 became obsolete in 2015 after 25 years of non-implementation with the attendant consequences of unmanaged, uncontrolled and unplanned urban expansion of the city. This necessitated the engagement of Arcus Gibb Prty, a multi-disciplinary South African consulting firm who worked with local professionals to prepare the Greater Port Harcourt City Master. The plan was completed in 2008 after consultations and engagement with critical stakeholders. It was presented to the public and came into force in April 2, 2009.

To forestall the mistake of the past based on lessons learnt from the failure of implementing the previous master plans, the Government constituted a Board; an independent management structure and took steps to ensure that the legal and administrative framework was backed up by law passed by the Rivers State House of Assembly.

The Greater Port Harcourt City Development Authority Law No. 2 of 2009 established the Greater Port Harcourt City Development Authority (GPHCDA) as a regulatory body with the mandate to facilitate the implementation of the Greater Port Harcourt City Master Plan and build the New City. The vision of the Authority is to transform the Greater Port Harcourt Area into, a world class city, internationally recognised for excellence and the preferred destination for investors and tourist. The mission is; to build a well-planned city through the implementation and enforcement of policies that will ensure the provision of first -rate infrastructure and delivery of quality services to enhance the standard of living and well being of the people (RSG, 2008). According to the pioneer Administrator of the Authority, the whole project was “a call to duty with the mission to build a world class Garden City, thriving economically, operating efficiently, prosperously and assuring its residents a quality of life envied for its peacefulness, comfort and sustainability” (Cookey-Gam, 2013).

The Greater Port Harcourt City Master Plan is a holistic plan for the development of the Greater Port Harcourt City Area, which spans eight Local Government Areas of Rivers State, namely- the whole of Port Harcourt Municipality and parts of Oyigbo, Ogu/ Bolo, Okrika, Obio/Akpor, Eleme, Etche and Ikwerre Local Government Areas. It covers an area of approximately 1,900 square kilometres (9,190,000 hectares of land) with a projected population of about two million people (Ede *et al.*, 2011). This is the third master plan for Port Harcourt and it is planned for a 50-year period with periodic review (Cookey-Gam, 2013).

The functions and powers of the Authority are well spelt in the law establishing it. The authority has much wider powers than a purely planning authority. It has powers to acquire land, construct infrastructure projects, provide and manage municipal services in accordance with the master plan. It also has statutory powers to initiate investment portfolios that seek to develop the city in partnership with the private sector, engage consultants and employ such technical staff it deems fit to achieve its cut-out role.

It has been over ten years of the setting up of the authority and implementation of the master plan, not much seems to be desired as to the progress made so far. This study intends to assess the effectiveness of the institutional framework for the implementation of the Greater Port Harcourt master plan.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The geographical scope of the study covers Phase 1 area of the study location that comprises the Mbodo-Aluu, Omagwa and Igwuruta communities. Phase 1 commenced in 2009 but it is still at the construction stage of the project cycle and is expected to have been completed by 2020. Phase 1 layout covers 1,692.07ha (16.921km²), extending from the Port-Harcourt International Airport junction across to Professor Tam David-West Road and part of Igwuruta. However, the intellectual scope is to carry out a process to evaluate implementation of the Greater Port Harcourt City Master Plan.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE STUDY AREA

Old Port Harcourt City was a port city established in 1913 during British colonial rule. It was named after Lord Lewis Harcourt, the then British Secretary of State for the Colonies (Owei, *et al.*, 2010; Ede *et al.*, 2011). Located within the southern coastal fringe of Nigeria close to the south-eastern hinterland, the city was established as a rail and seaport terminal for the exportation of coal and agricultural produce from the hinterland (Wolpe, 1974; Ikechukwu, 2015). The discovery of oil and gas in the late 1950 accelerated the industrial and commercial expansion of the city leading to its uncontrolled development and rapid expansion.

By 1965, the municipality became the site of Nigeria's largest harbour and the centre of Nigeria's petroleum activities (Wolpe, 1974; Izeogu, 1989). With that, there has been a constant influx of people into the city. Apart from the rise in population, the city has seen a corresponding leapfrogging physical expansion. Presently, the city's planning authority has struggled to cope with the rapid uncontrolled spatial expansion, population influx and overcrowding (VERML, 2009). Other studies have added that the existing infrastructure in the city has been in a deplorable condition, overburdened over time (Owei, *et al.*, 2010; Ede, *et al.*, 2011).

The GPHC Master Plan covers Port Harcourt City (Main Town) and the contiguous areas laid out for urban redevelopment, expansion, and modernization. It is an agglomeration or conurbation of the old Port-Harcourt City (inner core of the 1975 Master Plan) and parts of other Local Government Areas (LGAs) defined in the Greater Port-Harcourt City Master plan. The eight LGAs covered by the plan have been identified above and comprise of Port-Harcourt, Obio-Akpor, Okrika, Oyiabo, Ogu-Bolo, Etche, Eleme and Ikwerre, Oyiabo, Eleme, Okrika, and Ogu-Bolo LGAs are located in the east and south of the Central Business District. Obio/Akpor LGA is situated north of Port-Harcourt LGA while Ikwerre LGA is situated north-west of Obio/Akpor LGA, and Etche LGA is in the north-east.

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Concept of the Master Plan

A Master Plan is a dynamic, multifaceted, and comprehensive document that has different interpretations given by different scholars, but the intention has always been the same. For Kent (1964) the document serves as "ordinances or general plan with official statement of a municipal legislative body which set forth its major policies concerning desirable future physical development of an area". The perception of Roger (1999) regarding Master Plan is "a traditional document in Britain with master or comprehensive planning that develops a plan to cover development, use of land in order to maximize the overall benefit, and then ensuring adherence to the scheme in the urban area". Black (1975) on his part refers to the term as "the official public document adopted by a local government as a policy guide to decisions about the physical development of a community". Whichever perspective the document is being looked upon, Master Plans are documents designed by Town Planners and allied professionals with legal backing which involves series of activities of all sectors in any geographical area.

However, the aim of a Master Plan determines the roles it will play. In any democratic society where the legislative body is involved in the master planning processes, a Master Plan document is one that should be able to draw the attention of stakeholders regarding challenges and opportunities (Black,1975). For Black (1975), a Master Plan should be able to initiate policies through long-range appropriate phasing of the plan to provide a task for each

period within its implementation period. Also, Kent (1964) asserts that a Master Plan should be able to serve as an avenue to convey policy directions by implementing agencies. He further asserts that a Master Plan document should also serve as an educational tool for those who access it. In the opinion of Roger (1999), a Master Plan should be able to serve as an avenue for exploration as it suggests many functions to the planning staff; the executives; operating agencies for physical development; voters; politician and the public at the drafting of the plan and its adoption. A Master Plan gives implementation direction for every development especially in the preparation of zoning ordinances, sub-division control, urban renewal, etc.

The Planning Philosophy of the Greater Port-Harcourt City Master Plan Model

The planning philosophy of the firm engaged for Greater Port Harcourt adopted the rational comprehensive planning model or rational planning, sometimes referred to as synoptic approach. This approach is based on the top-down planning strategy. The top-down approach is associated with the rational planning movement and uses the planning process to establish a uniform landscape and architectural style based on an idealized medieval village.

The City is visually attractive to the extent that it is known as the Garden City of Nigeria, but it is arguable whether such an appellation still fits its present state. The ways some urban features disconnect are apparent for Port Harcourt, so it is a generally held opinion of a need to reinstate values that can uphold the former status, create good and healthy living environment, and achieve sustainability and plan. The objective of the Urban Design Framework for the master plan is to create a new and exciting urban environment where citizens feel safe, their lifestyle is uplifted and investments are protected through the application of known urban design principles (Ede, Owei and Akarolo;2008).

A Master Plan is a comprehensive document aimed at strategically developing areas of need as perceived by stakeholders in that locality. City development underpins the conception and subsequent implementation of any Master Plan. An example of such is the Greater Port-Harcourt City Master Plan which is a-50year strategic plan designed to integrate the old and new Port Harcourt City. The integrated Master Plan consists of transport, road, water, storm water, wastewater, land use, social infrastructure, and energy (gas and electricity) plans developed to be implemented in three phases. All phases of the development (including existing and future projects referred to as 'GPHC Development Projects') are scheduled to be completed by 2060 (VERML, 2009).

While the Greater Port Harcourt City Development Authority (GPHCDA) is the agency responsible for implementing the GPHC Master Plan, control of development activities is spatially shared between GPHCDA and the Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development (MPPUD). GPHCDA was established by the 'The Greater Port Harcourt City Development Authority Law' No. 2 of 2009 (GPHCDA, 2010). GPHCDA has been charged with the responsibility of facilitating the implementation of the GPHC Master Plan and developing the New City (GPHCDA, 2010). The objectives of the plan are primarily economic: that is, to enhance the standard of living and well-being of people in the city by transforming it into a functional, efficient, world class city with first-rate infrastructure and delivery of quality services (VERML, 2009; GPHCDA, 2010).

The successful implementation of the Master Plan is projected to yield improved commerce options as well as increased investment opportunities. Apart from yielding economic benefits, previous studies have argued that economic development should also be placed in the environmental context for protecting environmental quality (Glasson *et al.*, 2005; Ede, *et al.*, 2011; UNECA, 2011; Akukwe and Ogbodo, 2015).

The comprehensive Master Plan comprises the land-use plan and other sectoral plans. Implementation of the entire Master Plan has been phased, commencing from Phase-1 through Phase 2 to the Phase-4 projects. Phase-1 layout is in the northern axis of the Master Plan near the Port-Harcourt International Airport and is sub-divided into four manageable sub-phases A, B C and D (see Fig.1). Phase-2 layout is in the eastern axis near Etche LGA, while Phase 3 Project is in the south-eastern part of the Master Plan near Onne Seaport at Eleme. All phases will be connected by the Priority Road (M1 North-South Link Road), which is a dual-carriage freeway (VERML, 2009). The main anchors are Onne Seaport, Port-Harcourt Harbour and the Omagwa international airport.

Generally, the land use plan consists of high, medium, and low-density residential areas; commercial and industrial areas; cemetery; dumping site; international airport; University; open spaces, including riverine areas, golf courses, parks, gardens with landscape elements; rivers; metropolitan node; roads including major, minor, and other roads as well as future growth areas. Facilities include 24-hour electricity supply infrastructure; a network of good

roads/streets and public transportation system; drainage and storm water management system; engineered sanitary landfill for solid waste disposal; surveillance; and efficient security systems among other things (VERML, 2009; GPHCDA, 2010). The plan tried to take advantage of the two transport nodes (Air and seaports) in its development agenda.

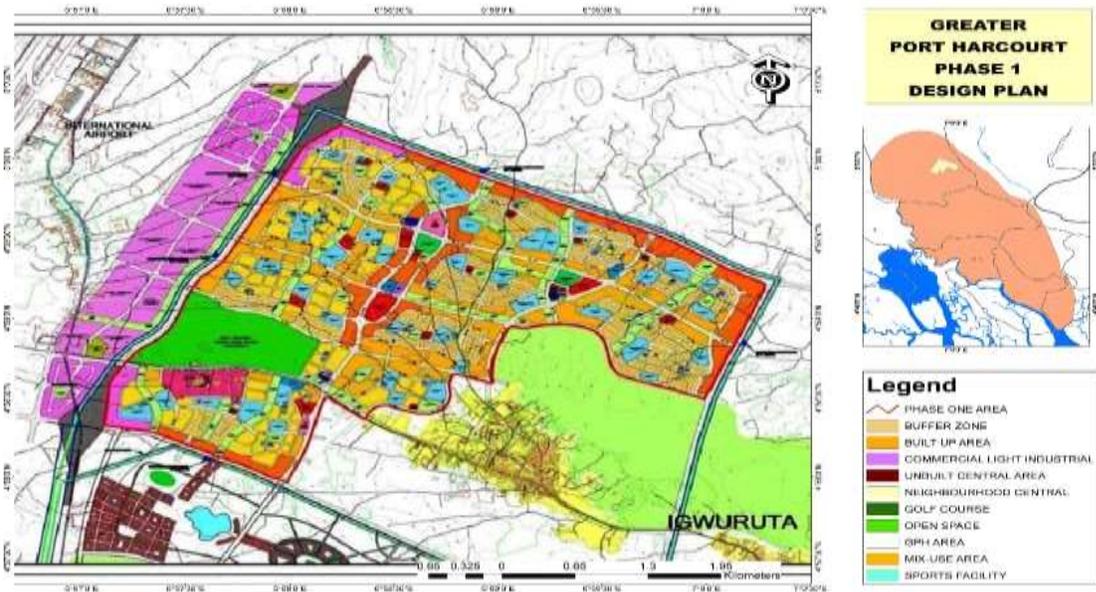


Fig.1
Phase 1
layout

showing 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D Sub- Projects of the GPHCMP.
(Source: Arcus Gibb, 2009)

Institutional Framework and Plan implementation

Urban planning, plan implementation and management involves rigorous processes in developing countries making it very difficult for the development authorities to govern and manage such settlements as a result of varying factors. Institutional framework refers to the institutions (tiers of Government) governance framework, organisations (Planning Authorities, PAs) framework, planning legislation framework (PLs) and administrative framework put in place to enable the implementation of plans. The institutional framework is the linkage that ensures effective flow of information from one part of a system to another. The frameworks determine the control of development and its management of urban areas (Wapwera et.al, 2015).

The bane of spatial and territorial planning in Nigeria is partly attributed to the lack of effectiveness of institutional framework. The attitude of government is greatly contributory to the poor state of human settlements in Nigeria. Less than 30% of the States in the federation have adopted physical planning laws deriving from the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law (NURP), CAP 138, LFN 2004. For States that have adopted planning laws, the attitude of government amounts to either not believing and/or abusing the law and structures that they created. Many of the activities we lay claims to as planning are mere paying lip service because in the first place, we don't carry our planning processes through, neither do we implement the few plans that we take the pains and resources to prepare. It is therefore needless to agitate about the need to plan if there is dearth of political will to implement the plans within the framework of established institutional structures.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

The study leaned on qualitative approach since it does not purport an objective reality of the subjects under investigation. Both primary and secondary sources of data were utilized. Primary data came through direct observation and site visits to the project area, in-depth face-to-face interview granted to carefully selected key informants including former and present staff and executive directors of GPHCDA. The qualitative data were analysed using thematic and content analysis. Secondary data sources were sourced from published government

official bulletins, Greater Port Harcourt City Master Plan and information and other information’s gathered through desk-top reviews.

4. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Institutional Framework for the Implementation of the GPHCMP

The Organizational structure of the Authority has at its apex the Chairman/Board of Directors, followed by the Administrator who is the Chief Accounting Officer of the Authority. Fig.1 Shows the organizational structure of the Greater Port Harcourt City Development Authority (GPHCDA).

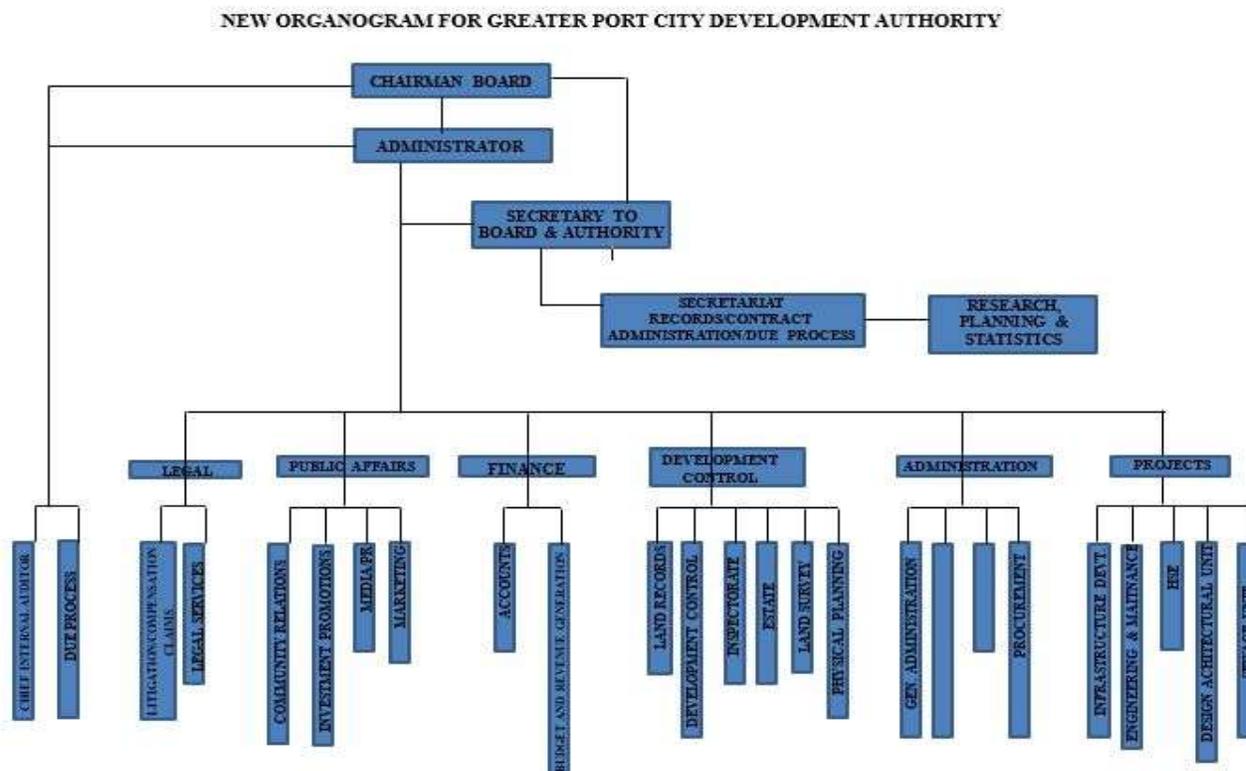


Fig.1: Organogram for GPHCDA
(Source: GPHCDA, March, 2020)

Table.1 shows the staff strength in the Administrator’s office and the six other departments of the Authority. It shows the number of required staff, existing staff strength, hence permits a judgment as to adequacy of staff strength. On the whole, the table paints a picture of staff inadequacy. The tables show that of the required staff capacity of 174, only 69 staff members were working in the Authority as at March, 2020, i.e., a staff deficit of 105.

Table.1: Staff Strength in GPHCDA (March, 2020)

S/No.	Department	No. of Required Staff	No. of Available Staff	Deficit
1	Administrator	3	1	2
2	Legal	10	3	7
3	Publications	20	10	10
4	Finance	10	7	3

5	Development Control	60	7	53
6	Administration	35	27	8
7	Projects	30	12	18
	Total	174	69	105

(Source: GPHCDA, 2020)

Physical Resource Capacity for Plan Implementation

Table.2 shows a summary of available hardware and vehicles for the implementation of the Greater Port Harcourt City Master Plan. The table shows that of the 21 available pool vehicles, 14 were bad, while other vehicles were either on loan to Supervisors or assigned to Managers and the others given to Board members. Other details are presented in the table below.

Table.2: Summary of Available Hardware and Vehicles in GPHCDA

S/No.	Available Hardware and Vehicles	No. Required	No. Available	Remarks
1	Laptops	75	40	17 Bad
2	Desktop	120	64	11 Bad
3	Network Printers	15	9	5 Bad
4	Plotters	6	2	Nil
5	HpProliant Server	8	4	Nil
6	Qnap	3	1	Nil
7	Monitor Console	3	1	Nil
8	i Direct Satellite Moderm	4	2	Nil
9	Cisco Switch (24 port)	12	8	Nil
VEHICLES				
1	Hyundai ix 35	13	13	Managers
2	Skoda Octiva	6	6	Supervisors on Loan
3	Toyota Hilux	9	9	Pool (5 Bad)
4	Ford Ranger	4	4	Pool (2 Bad)
5	Mitsubishi	3	3	Pool (2 Bad)
6	Hiace Bus	8	5	Pool (5 Bad)
7	Landcruisers	15	15	Board Members

(Source: GPHCDA, 2020)

The staff capacity of an organization affects the implementation of plans. Thus organizations, which have adequate staffing, and are highly skilled have the potential to achieve a successful implementation.

In a key informant interview, a participant who played a very significant role in the running of the Authority at inception indicated that,

“...the Authority started its operation in 2009 with staff strength of 77. Between 2010 and 2011, the staff increased to 105 and with a recruitment that was carried out in 2013, the staff strength of the Authority increased to 113, which is still inadequate to carry out the enormous task of achieving the implementation of the Master Plan and that of Development Control”. (Key informant 1)

The participant further stated that the Authority needs more planning officers as it is a planning development agency.

The institutional survey indicates that qualified personnel occupy the majority of the key positions in GPHCDA on inception; however, the Development Control department is grossly understaffed, with only seven (7) staff. Further analysis revealed that the GPHCDA had no Estate Valuer /Manager, although the Authority's organizational structure made provision for such a position. All these are affecting the implementation process as

seven planners alone cannot carry out the job of plan making and development control in a planning agency like GPHCDA.

The availability of equipment such as computers, vehicles and others influence the success of the implementation of plans. Without the needed equipment at the Authority, most of the activities for plan implementation would not be carried out.

In furtherance of the analysis, a key informant interview with one of the Planning Officers in the Authority elicited the following from him:

“since we do not have enough vehicles at the GPHCDA, we are unable to monitor all the projects the Authority is implementing in the area, and as such it is tough to ensure that the contractors perform all the activities as outlined in the contractual agreement. Sometimes, most of them abandon their sites for more than six months without the Authority having any knowledge of it” (Key Informant 2).

The institutional survey revealed that GPHCDA lacked the majority of equipment needed to support plan implementation.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The results reveal that the institutional framework of the Greater Port Harcourt City Development Authority is weak to implement the master plan. The administrative structure of the Authority has been constrained by numerous forms of constraints leading to a non-functional institutional. The staff capacity of an organization affects the implementation of plans. Thus organizations, which have adequate staffing, and are highly skilled have a potential to achieve a successful implementation.

The study revealed staff deficit in the Administrator’s office and in the six other departments of the Authority. The existing staff strength is inadequate in the various departments. It was also revealed that there was substantial employment of unqualified staff, principally spouses and relatives of influential politicians; clearly detrimental to the operations of the Authority.

The availability of equipment such as computers, vehicles and others influence the success of the implementation of plans. Without the needed equipment at the Authority, most of the activities for plan implementation would not be carried out. It is evident that shortage of equipment has impeded the implementation process in GPHCDA.

Recommendations

- i. Hire staff with the requisite skills, motivated to carry out tasks with a high sense of responsibility and productivity
- ii. Organize specialized training of its staff for capacity building and also sets targets for staff training, staff wellbeing, customer service and branding.
- iii. Introduce a rolling 2-5-year budget plan (depending on the lifespan of the equipment) for all the existing and future equipment needed for plan preparation and implementation.
- iv. Conduct periodic monitoring and evaluation of productivity targets for effective Master Plan implementation.

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