

A More Effective Approach To Implementing and Managing the Model City Plan(s)

THE PLANNING FRAMEWORK AS A FLEXIBLE AND ROBUST TOOL

The Lagos State Physical Planning and Urban Development (LASPPDA), the agency in charge of metropolitan planning and management have over the past couple of years received legal backing to enforce and bring disciplinary action against the contravention of its Model City Plans (MCPs). The MCPs (starting with Ikoyi/Victoria Island) are location specific planning guidelines which in totality have been designed to manage the transformation of Lagos into a Megacity along the same parameters with its counterparts in other emerging markets such as Singapore.

Unfortunately, building collapse due to poor structural design and construction processes, illegal conversions and blatant non-compliance with approval drawings continue to be a major challenge for the Agency. Using the Ikoyi - Victoria Island Model City Plan as a case study, this edition of the RE Insight summarises the effectiveness of the MCPs. It highlights some of the key factors affecting its successful implementation and proffers ideas to achieve better and more effective monitoring and control processes.

The Ikoyi—Victoria Island Model City Plan (IVMCP)

The IVMCP was developed in 2005 as the blue print for a major intervention to; check the deterioration of the most prestigious residential districts in Lagos and tailor future developments in these areas in line with a more integrated planning concept for the whole State. At the official unveiling in January 2007, Lagos State Commissioner for Physical Planning and Urban Development stated that these documents will act as a physical planning framework to guide the development of the twin districts for the next 10 years (2005 to 2015).ⁱⁱ

IVMCP covers more than 2200hectares of prime land. It comprises ten settlements including the old Ikoyi, Parkview, Banana Island, Victoria Island, Victoria Island Annex, Osborne, 2nd Avenue Extension amongst others. The Model City Plans for other districts (except Ikeja which was recently released) are currently being developed.ⁱⁱⁱ

Effective Implementation of the Model City Plan

Emerging economies such as Malaysia and India with similar urban planning challenges in their main cities appear to record better successes in their long term sustainable planning initiatives. Planners in these regions stress that planning policies need to be flexible to meet the challenges of perpetual changes in emerging economies, in the global climate, and technology. Flexibility suggests that a high level of skills, knowledge and experience is required within the regulatory agencies. Regulators must be equipped with sufficient knowledge and work with a framework which makes room for inno-

vative thinking and solutions. This is certainly an area which the LASPPDA needs to focus. Other factors which impede effective implementation include:

The retrospective (and zero-negotiation) approach of the IVMCP. Following the publication of the IVMCP, the planning office has been inundated with complaints from investors and developers who had acquired property or land in Ikoyi and Victoria Island because the new document altered use and density. As an example, in Banana Island, high density (8—15 floors) commercial plots became low density (i.e. 20 units per hectare) residential plots, making nonsense of the viability appraisals upon which the investments in land were made. Having acquired the land (and with no hope of recouping land value in a softened market) most investors in this situation are willing to “bend the rules” in any way possible to ensure that their transactions turn viable.

Lack of flexibility on the part of planning regulators. 90% of applications for approval include a request for a Change of Use or Increase in Density. This statistic is sufficient indication that something is not working. While the planning office often dismisses this as the developer’s need to maximize profit, most developers are able to justify their request because of the very high cost of acquisition, regularization (at US\$100/sqm of land bought from the Federal Government) and approval which has increased by more than 50% in the past few years.

Most requests are turned down, and again, most developers seek alternative ways to achieve their objective—a good return on their investment. It does not help that the penalties for commencing construction activity without appropriate approvals and for contraventions, is relatively mild. According to the planning office, 80% of contraventions are for illegal Change of Use, particularly from residential to commercial use.

Excessive Influences. Undue use of influence by Investors/ Developers is also one of the major challenges hindering the effective implementation of the IVMCP. According to unavailable statistics, of twenty (20) developments (under construction) found to be in contravention, more than half end up sealed by the planning office monitoring. However, in less than 2 weeks, only one (if at all any) will remain sealed. Most developers and investors in Ikoyi and Victoria Island are high net worth individuals who have access to high ranking officials and



Urban, city or town planning integrates land use planning and transportation planning to improve the built, economic and social planning of communities



Urban planning design settlements from the smallest towns to the largest cities—Cityscape of Hong Kong.



Sustainable cities imbibe efficient land use, good access, efficient transportation network, less pollution and waste including good housing and environment—City scope of Dallas Texas, USA

are able to influence decisions in favour of their projects.

Lack of an organised implementation and monitoring system. There are also internal problems within the planning offices, which contribute to an ineffective monitoring process. Although structures and systems for faster and simpler planning processes are continually developed by LASG, the lack of infrastructure to support these processes does not encourage efficient enforcement. Inadequate information and data for planning, lack of, or inefficient IT systems, poor filing systems, dilapidated buildings serving as zonal offices and insufficient monitoring vehicles and personnel all contribute to poor monitoring process.

Poor access to documents and inefficient information dissemination. Access to documents and dissemination of information within the planning office and outside to the public is an arduous task. This can be attributed to the ad hoc filing systems, the inefficient communication between departments and the lack of urgency and bureaucracy inherent in the public sector. Regardless, the planning authority lays claim to improved information dissemination compared with five years ago. It is believed that upon attaining full development, the Mega City Development Authority (MCDA) - an agency created to coordinate development and enforce compliance and approbation of the IVMCP through stakeholder participation should help bridge the information and document processing gap.^{iv}

Planning regulations do not fully accommodate the dynamics of current developments. It is obvious that as cities such as Lagos continue to expand due to rapid urbanization, small and large institutions continue to seek business and growth opportunities and a middle class continues to grow, there will be changes in the urban climate. Innovative technologies will play a role and projects will become more complex, however, the biggest and most significant contributor will be the flexibility built into the guidelines formulated to aid, encourage/promote and guide physical development.

Conclusions

Physical planning guidelines are tools for environmental development in the immediate term and set the direction for future growth of any city. Therefore sustainable development and management of human settlement and infrastructure hinges greatly on the effectiveness of the physical development plans.^v

Planning should be 'with the people' and not 'for the people'. Stakeholders should be allowed to feel a sense of responsibility through collaborative planning for conformation and sustainability of development plans. The MCDA should be well structured to include private sector (even if as members of an advisory board). This is critical to the success of the IVMCP and other Model City Plans currently being developed. The general public will be more informed and can take some of the responsibilities for ensuring adherence and approbation.

Developers and investors will always seek for maximum returns on their investments. The cost of land and approval in a particular area will have a direct impact on the overall viability of projects in that area. While a firmer approach to contraventions is necessary, the planning office should encourage and work with developers and investors on special projects; the objective of alleviating

congestion, density control and mix of use should remain the ultimate goal.

With regards to the retrospective laws, LASG should consider dealing with all such cases under a special arrangement through which the objective of the investors and the Government are met.

Finally, while commendable efforts have been made in making Lagos a world class model city, the focus must be to develop and implement a more holistic and efficient system for granting approvals, including a transparent process for granting special approvals and concessions. For this to happen, the planning office at all levels must work with adequate infrastructure and the appropriate IT systems for effective documentation, training, information dissemination and monitoring.

For the IVMCP to truly support the development of the proposed Mega City, regulators need to ensure that the IVMCP is constantly evolving and developed with input from all stakeholders. Flexibility will integrate public needs and interests with well thought out planning policies accepted by all.



Urban reconstruction or regeneration should be detailed and well thought for an easier implementation and monitoring process—Detailed plan for the reconstruction of Kabul old city, Afghanistan



Collaborative planning should be encouraged for a more holistic and acknowledged master plan. Government must encourage inputs from private sector and the general public

References

- ⁱ Castleweekly website—Fashola's strict planning regulations 2007
- ⁱⁱ www.thenews.com—The Ikoyi—Victoria Island Model City Plan Unveiled 2007
- ⁱⁱⁱ Lagos State Official Website
- ^{iv} Nigerian Compass—Why Lagos established Model City Development Authority, 2009
- ^v Journal on Sustainable Development—Challenges to Sustainable Physical Planning Development in Metropolitan Lagos, 2009



The urban renewal and regeneration of Ikoyi—Victoria Island should be owned by all. We should all be responsible for its effective implementation and approbation of the Mode City Plan