Alternatives to Master Plan as a Development Control Tool in Nigeria: A Review

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ABSTRACT

The Master Plan has been the primary development control tool in Nigeria for many decades. However, it often falls short due to its rigid structure, high cost of creation, outdated content, and limited public participation. As urban areas continue to grow rapidly and informally, this plan struggles to keep up with the pace. This paper examines the limitations of Master Plans and evaluates alternative tools for development control such as Strategic Spatial Planning, Structure Plans, Local Development Plans, Development Guidelines, and Participatory Planning. These approaches offer more flexibility, faster implementation, and greater public participation. Case studies from cities like Lagos, Enugu, and Kaduna show how these alternatives can better address issues like informal settlements and infrastructure needs. The study also indicates the importance of public participation in achieving fair and sustainable development. In conclusion, the paper recommends revising planning laws, investing in professional training, improving institutions, and adopting more inclusive, locally informed planning practices. By doing so, Nigeria can move towards a more responsive and effective urban development control system that matches the rapid growth of its cities.

Keywords: Master Plan, Development Control, Public Participation, Strategic Spatial Planning

INTRODUCTION

Development control plays an important role in urban planning by turning our goals for the built environment into real and physical outcomes (Hall, 2014). In Nigeria, where cities are growing quickly and facing many development challenges, efficient development control is very essential. Urban planning in Nigeria has gone through several changes over the years, as it has been influenced by its colonial history and its social and economic development. Historically, the main tool used to guide urban growth and manage development in Nigerian cities has been the Master Plan (Uduku, 2006).

Master Plans are known for offering a broad and long-term plan for how cities should develop. They were first introduced during the colonial era as a way to manage space and separate different social groups (Home, 2013). After Nigeria gained independence, these plans remained popular due to the fast pace of urbanization, population growth, and a strong desire to create modern and well-structured cities. As a result, many Nigerian cities, including Abuja, Lagos, Ibadan, and Kano developed Master Plans to guide their physical development and control how land is used (Wahab, 2011). These plans typically divided urban areas into different zones for specific land uses and set standards for development. They were intended to serve as a roadmap for a city's future.

However, as Nigerian cities kept growing and evolving rapidly, the disadvantages of relying only on Master Plans became more obvious. The unpredictable and fast-changing nature of urban growth in Nigeria made it difficult for the rigid, fixed structure of traditional Master Plans to keep up. Although they initially seemed like a good solution, Master Plans have faced several serious challenges in effectively managing urban development. The first and major issue is their lack of flexibility and the lengthy time it takes to prepare and approve them

(Aribigbola, 2006). In fast-growing cities where social and economic conditions are changing quickly, Master Plans often become outdated before they are even put into action. This rigidity makes it hard to respond to new or unexpected situations, which leads to a gap between the plan's original goals and what actually happens on-site (Aribigbola, 2008).

The second challenge is the high cost and technical expertise required to create Master Plans. Many cities in Nigeria do not have the financial or technical resources needed (Olujimi, 2009). Long approval processes involving multiple levels of government make the situation worse by causing delays, which can reduce the plans' relevance by the time they are finally implemented (Omollo et al., 2018). Another problem is the limited involvement of the public in the planning process. In Nigeria, Master Plans have traditionally been created through a top-down approach, with very little input from the local communities. As a result, these plans often fail to reflect the actual needs and priorities of the people they are meant to serve, which makes it harder to implement and enforce them effectively (Olatunji et al., 2022).

Moreover, Master Plans have not been successful in dealing with the rise of informal settlements and the fast pace of urbanization in Nigeria. Because these plans are based on formal processes and regulations, they often overlook or ignore the realities of informal urban development. This leads to a situation where many people live and work outside the scope of official planning (Wahab, 2011). This disconnect weakens the role of the Master Plan as a comprehensive tool for managing development.

As a result, there is growing recognition that Nigeria needs more flexible, adaptable, and participatory alternatives to traditional Master Plans. These alternatives should be better suited to the fast-changing nature of Nigerian cities, include local communities in the planning process, and support long-term, sustainable development. This research aims to evaluate these alternative approaches by looking at the weaknesses of the Master Plan, identifying possible new strategies, reviewing their effectiveness in Nigeria and proposing policy recommendations to support their adoption.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Development Control

Development control is the regulatory aspect of the urban planning process that governs how land is used and developed (Tewdwr-Jones, 1995). It serves as the practical side of planning by turning strategies and policies into physical changes on-site (Cullingworth et al., 2006). The main goal of development control is to make sure that all forms of development follow the regulations, standards, and planning frameworks already in place. This helps promote orderly, fair, and sustainable growth in urban areas (Tewdwr-Jones & Harris, 2002).

The role of development control in managing cities is extremely important. When done well, it helps in many ways: it ensures land is used efficiently, supports the provision of infrastructure and services, protects the environment, preserves cultural and historic sites, and improves the quality of life for people living in cities (Allmendinger, 1996). Without effective development control, cities risk becoming disorganized, polluted, unequal, and wasteful in how they use resources (Tewdwr-Jones, 1995).

Development control processes have changed over time as cities faced new challenges and needs. In Nigeria, development control has grown alongside the history of urban planning. Before colonial rule, many Nigerian communities had their own traditional ways of managing land and resolving disputes (Home, 2013). However, urban planning and development control were introduced during British colonial rule. These colonial planning laws and regulations were mainly designed to benefit colonial interests and to control the growth of cities like Lagos, Ibadan, and Kano. These early processes often used a top-down approach, with little attention given to the needs and voices of local people (Adeponle, 2013).

After Nigeria became independent in 1960, urban planning and development control became more important due to rapid city growth and the need to manage space in a way that supported economic development and a growing population (Aluko, 2011). During this time, Master Plans became an important part of development control, influenced by international trends and the belief that cities needed clear, long-term plans. However, how

well these plans worked depended a lot on Nigeria's unique social, political, and economic conditions, such as fast population growth, informal urban expansion, institutional and governance challenges (Adeogun et al., 2017).

Master Plan as a Development Control Tool

A Master Plan, also called a comprehensive or development plan is a traditional method used in urban planning to guide the long-term physical growth of a city or region (Allmendinger, 1996). These plans usually cover a 15 to 25-year period and include many important sections such as land use, transportation, infrastructure, housing strategies, environmental protection, and economic development goals (Levy, 2009). A Master Plan acts as a roadmap to help shape future development and coordinate the efforts of various stakeholders involved in managing urban development.

The main components of a Master Plan often start with an in-depth analysis of existing conditions then, predictions about the future population and development needs of the city, as well as the setting of specific goals and objectives for the plan (Olujimi, 2009). One of the important parts of any Master Plan is the land use map, which shows designated areas for different purposes such as housing, business, industry, and recreation. These maps usually go hand-in-hand with zoning laws that define what types of buildings or activities are allowed in each area, along with regulations on building height, space between buildings, and other development guidelines (Omollo et al., 2018).

In Nigeria, the use of Master Plans has been influenced by several key factors. The colonial government played a major role in introducing this approach, and after independence, the rapid growth of cities made many decision-makers feel that a structured and logical plan was essential for managing urban development (Wahab, 2011). The appeal of having a detailed, long-term plan, along with the influence of global planning trends, helped establish the Master Plan as the main tool for controlling development in Nigerian cities for many years (Wahab, 2011).

Examples from Nigerian cities show both the advantages and disadvantages linked to this approach. Abuja, Nigeria's capital, is a clear case of a city that was planned and developed based on a Master Plan. The Abuja Master Plan, created in the late 1970s, laid out specific designs for the city's layout, infrastructure, and land use (Federal Capital Territory Administration, 2005). While this plan has influenced much of Abuja's development, its implementation has struggled with problems like rapid population growth, the rise of informal settlements, and changes made to the original plan (Adeponle, 2013).

Lagos, Nigeria's largest city, has had several Master Plans aimed at controlling its complex urban expansion. However, the fast-paced growth and sheer size of Lagos have often overwhelmed these plans, making it hard for them to keep up (Agbola & Agunbiade, 2009). Similarly, cities like Ibadan and Kano have also developed Master Plans at various times, but their success has been mixed and often met with serious challenges (Wahab, 2011).

Even though Master Plans face many criticisms, they still offer some clear benefits. Their long-term perspective can help provide direction and a sense of order in urban development. Because they cover a wide range of planning issues, such as land use, roads, and public services. They also allow for a more unified and coordinated approach to urban development.

Challenges of Master Plans in Nigeria

Using Master Plans as the main tool for managing urban development in Nigeria has come with many problems that limit its success. One of the biggest issues is their **lack of flexibility and adaptability** (Aribigbola, 2008). These plans are usually based on long-term predictions and assumptions that often fail to match the fast-changing and unpredictable nature of Nigerian cities. Population growth, unexpected economic, and social change can quickly make these plans outdated and less useful (Wahab, 2011). Also, changing or updating a Master Plan is a long and complicated process, which often means the plan stays out of touch with the current situation.

Another major problem is the **high cost of preparing** these plans. Creating a detailed Master Plan involves

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significant expenses for collecting data, conducting expert research, and consultations (Adeponle, 2013). Since many urban areas in Nigeria have limited financial resources, the cost of developing and regularly updating these plans can be a serious barrier. As a result, many cities end up with old plans that are never fully put into action, making them less useful as planning tools.

Implementation challenges also weaken the impact of Master Plans. Even when the plans are well-designed, putting them into practice is often difficult due to problems like insufficient funding, weak government institutions, poor coordination between agencies, and abuse of political power (Agbola & Agunbiade, 2009). Many of the ambitious proposals found in these plans do not receive enough financial backing or administrative support to actually happen.

The **lack of public participation** in the planning process is another big drawback. Most Master Plans in Nigeria have been created through a top-down approach, with little input from local communities or other stakeholders (Aribigbola, 2006). This lack of involvement often leads to plans that do not reflect the real needs and values of the people they are meant to serve. As a result, people may ignore or resist the plans, leading to poor enforcement and failure in implementation.

In many cases, Master Plans in Nigeria have also **overlooked informal settlements and fast-paced urbanization**. These plans tend to focus only on officially planned areas, ignoring the reality of informal developments, which are common in most Nigerian cities (Obiadi, 2018). Because of this gap, many urban residents and their activities fall outside the scope of the Master Plan. This situation encourages the growth of unplanned communities, weak infrastructure, and social inequality.

Lastly, **enforcement of planning regulations** is often weak in Nigeria. Problems such as corruption, not enough staff or resources in planning departments, and low public awareness about planning regulations all contribute to this issue (Minjibir, 2020). Even the best Master Plans cannot succeed if their regulations are not followed or are enforced unfairly.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Search Criteria

A primary source of information for this study came from peer-reviewed journal articles in the fields of urban planning, development control, urban studies, and African studies. These sources usually contain original research, theoretical discussions, and case studies that are directly relevant to the research topic. To find these articles, academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and JSTOR were used. Searches were done using the following keywords; “development control Nigeria,” “urban planning Nigeria,” “Master Plan limitations,” “alternatives to Master Plan,” “strategic spatial planning,” “structure plans,” “participatory planning,” and “urban governance in Nigeria.”

Comparative Assessment

In the process of reviewing past literature, a comparative assessment was done to evaluate the pros and cons of Master Plans and the alternative tools for development control mentioned in the literature. A clear set of standards was developed to compare the different planning methods. These included how flexible and adaptable each method is, the level of detail, how much they involve the public, how much they cost to prepare and carry out, how well they handle informal settlements, and whether they are suitable for Nigeria’s planning system. The features of each planning approach, such as Master Plans, Strategic Spatial Planning, Structure Plans, Action Area Plans, Local Development Plans, Development Guidelines, and Participatory Planning were described based on the previously mentioned criteria, using information from past literature.

The aim of this comparison was to give a well-rounded view of the pros and cons involved in selecting different tools for development control, and to help suggest recommendations on what works best for the Nigerian development control process.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Comparing Master Plans with Their Alternatives

Research shows that urban planning has moved from depending heavily on comprehensive, long-term Master Plans to more flexible and citizen-centered approaches. While a Master Plan once seemed like a logical tool to guide urban development, they have shown many weaknesses when applied in Nigerian cities where resources are limited and change happens fast (Aribigbola, 2008).

Table 1 Comparative Assessment of Master Plan and its Alternatives

	Master Plan	**Strategic Spatial Planning (SSP)**	**Structure Plan**	**Action Area Plan**	**Local Development Plan (LDP)**	**Development Guidelines & Zoning Regulations**	**Participatory Planning Approaches**
Time Horizon	Long-term (15-25 years)	Medium to Long-term (Adaptive)	Medium-term (10-15 years)	Short to Medium-term (Specific areas)	Short-term (Local level)	Ongoing (Regularly updated)	Ongoing (Iterative)
Level of Detail	High (Detailed land use, infrastructure, regulations)	Low to Medium (Broad frameworks, strategic directions)	Medium (Strategic land use, key infrastructure)	High (Detailed proposals for specific areas)	High (Detailed for local area)	Variable (Can range from broad principles to detailed standards)	Process-oriented (Focus on engagement)
Flexibility	Low (Rigid, difficult to adapt to change)	High (Adaptive, responsive to changing circumstances)	Medium (More flexible than Master Plans)	High (Focused on specific needs)	High (Responsive to local needs)	High (Can be easily updated and adjusted)	High (Iterative and responsive to feedback)
Participation	Traditionally low (Top-down approach)	High (Emphasis on stakeholder engagement and collaboration)	Medium (Can involve stakeholder consultation)	Variable (Can involve local stakeholders)	High (Community-driven and participatory)	Variable (Can be developed with stakeholder input)	Central (Focus on involving communities and stakeholders)
Cost	High (Extensive data collection, expert input)	Medium to High (Requires strategic thinking and stakeholder engagement)	Medium (Less detailed than Master Plans)	Medium (Focused on smaller areas)	Low to Medium (Depending on the scale and complexity)	Low to Medium (Focus on specific aspects of development)	Variable (Depends on the extent and methods of participation)
Implementation	Often poor due to funding, capacity, and lack of flexibility (Agbola, 2005)	Potentially better due to adaptability and stakeholder buy-in (Harrison et al., 2014)	Potentially better than Master Plans due to strategic focus (Enugu State, 2009)	Can be effective for targeted development and regeneration (Lagos State, 2012)	High potential for local ownership and effective implementation (Couch, 1999)	Can be effective if clear and consistently applied (Lagos State, 2010)	Can lead to better implementation due to community ownership (Innes & Booher, 2010)

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Addressing Informal Settlements	Often fails to integrate informal areas (Myers, 2011)	Potential to be more inclusive through participatory approaches (Aribigbola, 2006)	May provide a framework for integrating informal areas (Enugu State, 2009)	Can be used for upgrading and integrating informal settlements (Kaduna State, 2019)	Directly addresses local needs and can facilitate in-situ upgrading (Mitlin & Satterthwaite, 2013)	Can be adapted to guide development in informal areas	Crucial for understanding and addressing the needs of informal communities (Aribigbola, 2006)
Sustainability	Can promote sustainability if explicitly integrated, but often lacks flexibility	Strong potential for integrating sustainability principles through strategic thinking	Can incorporate sustainability at a strategic level	Can address sustainability issues within specific project areas	Can be tailored to promote local sustainability initiatives	Can explicitly promote sustainable building and development practices (Lagos State, 2010)	Can foster community-led sustainable development initiatives

Source: Authors' Comparative Review (2025)

As shown in Table 1, Master Plans often struggle to succeed because they are too rigid and difficult to update in fast-changing cities like Nigeria's urban areas. They also tend to be expensive and do not usually include public input, which adds to their disadvantages. On the other hand, tools like Strategic Spatial Planning (SSP) are more open and flexible. They aim to set broad goals and involve various stakeholders (Albrechts, 2004; Healey, 2003). Structure Plans offer a mid-term strategy that is less detailed than Master Plans, making them easier to adjust at the local level (Enugu State Government, 2009). Action Area Plans help tackle specific development issues in focused areas (Roberts, 2000), while Local Development Plans (LDPs) allow public participation and take a bottom-up approach (Couch, 1999). Development Guidelines and Zoning Regulations offer clear-cut rules for managing certain parts of development and can be easily updated (Carmona et al., 2003; Lagos State Government, 2010). Participatory Planning Approach places strong importance on community involvement in controlling urban development (Innes & Booher, 2010).

Studies suggest that the failure of Master Plans in Nigeria, like their lack of response to rapid urban growth, poor handling of informal settlements, and weak implementation has led to a push for more inclusive and flexible development control tools (Myers, 2011).

Case Studies of Nigerian Cities Using Alternative Development Control Tools

Even though the use of alternative development tools is still relatively new in Nigeria, a few cities and states have started trying out these tools.

Enugu Structure Plan: The Enugu Structure Plan (2009–2029) marks a big change towards a more flexible and strategic planning method in Enugu State (Enugu State Government, 2009). Unlike the traditional Master Plan, which maps out exact land uses for the entire city, this plan provides general guidance for development and allows for detailed planning at smaller scales. It also focuses on sustainable growth and tries to include informal settlements in the structure plan. Despite some issues in putting the plan into action, it stands out as a strong example of adaptable planning in Nigeria (Okeke et al., 2020).

Lagos Development Guidelines: Lagos State, has started to rely more on Development Guidelines and updated zoning laws (Lagos State Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development, 2010). These focus on specific issues like building standards, environmental impact assessments, and infrastructure standards. The state is also working to make its zoning rules more responsive to changing city needs. Projects like the Lagos Mega City Project use Action Area Planning to renew and develop certain parts of the city (Lagos State Government, 2012). These efforts show that Lagos is moving toward a more flexible and precise way of managing urban

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development.

Kaduna Urban Renewal Projects: Kaduna State has begun a major urban renewal project that uses Action Area Planning and strategic infrastructure planning. The program upgrades roads and public areas and redevelops certain zones of the city. Although this doesn't completely replace a Master Plan, it shows how targeting specific areas can be more effective. It also encourages public participation in planning and implementation (Kaduna State Government, 2019).

These examples, though still few, show that Nigeria is beginning to move away from traditional Master Plans and toward more adaptable tools. However, for these approaches to succeed, there must be a strong institutional framework, enough funding, and good political commitment.

Public Participation in Alternative Development Control Tools

Previous literature indicates how important public participation is in today's development planning, especially now that planning is moving away from the top-down model of traditional Master Plans (Healey, 2003; Innes & Booher, 2010). Alternative tools like Strategic Spatial Planning and Local Development Plans are built to include various groups of local residents and businesses, in the decision-making process.

Why Public Participation Matters: Getting the public involved in creating and applying development policies has several benefits. Firstly, it helps ensure that development policies match the real needs of the people affected by them (Forester, 1999). Community members often have detailed knowledge about their neighborhoods that can help improve planning outcomes. Secondly, when people feel involved, they're more likely to support and follow the plans (Aribigbola, 2006). Thirdly, public participation helps promote transparency and reduce corruption in development planning by making sure decisions made reflect public interests (Aribigbola, 2006).

Challenges to Participation in Nigeria: Even with these benefits, Nigeria faces several obstacles in making public participation work. One problem is ensuring all voices are heard, especially those of poor or marginalized groups (Mitlin & Satterthwaite, 2013). Another issue is the general lack of public understanding about planning, which can limit effective participation. It is important to train both planners and communities to work together meaningfully. Also, proper public participation takes time and resources, and some officials still prefer the old top-down planning methods (Aribigbola, 2006).

Even with these difficulties, the research shows that public participation is key to achieving fair, lasting, and successful development control in Nigeria. Government agencies need to support public engagement, build planning capacity, and encourage a culture of cooperation and dialogue with residents.

How Well Alternatives Work for Development Control

The success of alternative planning tools in development control can be measured by how flexible, fast to implement, and sustainable they are.

Flexibility: One of the main benefits of Strategic Spatial Planning, Structure Plans, and Development Guidelines is their flexibility (Carmona et al., 2003). These tools are made to change with time and allow for updates as needed, without the long, complex processes required to amend Master Plans. This is especially important in Nigerian cities, where things change quickly, and new problems or opportunities often appear. Flexible tools make it easier to respond effectively (Albrechts, 2004).

Speed of Implementation: Master Plans in Nigeria are often slow to prepare and approve, making them outdated by the time they're ready (Aribigbola, 2008). Alternatives like Action Area Plans and Development Guidelines can be implemented faster because they focus on specific issues or areas (Roberts, 2000). Even though Strategic Spatial Planning looks at long-term goals, it can also speed up action on key projects. Many alternative approaches also support collaboration among stakeholders, which can help move things along more quickly (Lagos State Government, 2010).

Sustainability: As urban sustainability becomes a top priority, alternative planning tools provide good ways to

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include environmental, social, and economic goals in development control (Watson, 2009). Strategic Spatial Planning can guide long-term actions to protect the environment, promote fairness, and support economic growth (Harrison et al., 2014). Structure Plans are useful for organizing land use and infrastructure in ways that limit environmental harm and make better use of resources (Enugu State Government, 2009). Development Guidelines can clearly include regulations that support sustainable development and green infrastructure (Lagos State Government, 2010). In addition, participatory planning allows communities to take part in identifying and implementing local solutions for environmental sustainability (Mitlin & Satterthwaite, 2013). These alternative approaches offer more inclusive and environmentally conscious solutions compared to the often rigid and socially exclusive nature of traditional Master Plans, which helps to support sustainable urban development in Nigeria.

Proposed Implementation Strategy for Alternatives to Master Plan: A Case Study of Enugu and Lagos

There are different hierarchies of cities in Nigeria which are mostly categorized by population and historical evolution. This classification makes Lagos a mega city, and Enugu a secondary city, hence the case studies for our proposed seven (7) steps implementation strategy in Table 2. This strategy addresses what each step will look like for different cities.

Table 2 Proposed Implementation Strategy for Alternatives to Master Plan

	Megacities (e.g. Lagos)	**Secondary Cities (e.g. Enugu)**
Step 1: Stakeholder Identification and Engagement	This means identifying and consulting the right stakeholders which may include government agencies, private sector developers, neighborhood associations and civil society groups.	This entails engaging local leaders, religious heads, and local organizations. Inclusive engagement builds trust, fosters transparency, and ensures equal representation in planning.
Step 2: Situational Assessment	This step involves analyzing existing development plans, infrastructure conditions, and demographic trends. Planners must evaluate which parts of existing Master Plans are outdated and what gaps exist in terms of service delivery or land use regulation. In megacities, this may include reviewing traffic congestion zones, slum areas, and utility coverage.	Secondary cities should focus on identifying the effects of rural-urban migration and expansion of urban fringes. Accurate data gathered during this phase will ensure that subsequent planning tools accommodate the existing condition of the city.
Step 3: Planning Tool Selection	Cities must choose the most suitable planning tool. Megacities like Lagos may opt for Action Area Plans in areas experiencing intense population pressure, like informal settlements or central business districts.	Secondary cities may benefit from implementing Local Development Plans in peri-urban areas where growth is unregulated but promising.
Step 4: Capacity Building	In megacities, this may involve creating specialized units for zoning, environmental planning, and slum upgrading. Collaboration with universities and NGOs helps bridge the knowledge gap through workshops, internships, and research projects.	Local planning authorities should train planners on Geographic Information Systems (GIS), participatory planning methods, project management, and policy interpretation.
Step 5: Legal and Policy Framework	Megacities may need to enact policy updates to revise and amend planning laws to formally recognize tools like Structure Plans, Strategic Spatial Planning, and Action Area Plans.	Secondary cities could create city-specific planning standards that complement national policies and planning standards. pr

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Step 6: Funding and Partnerships	Megacities should seek public-private partnerships (PPPs) for infrastructure, housing, and service delivery. Lagos, for instance, can partner with real estate developers to implement Action Area Plans.	International donors and development banks can also support participatory planning programs, especially in secondary cities. Cities like Enugu may benefit from grants for slum upgrading.
Step 7: Implementation and Feedback	Megacities should conduct bi-annual review meetings with stakeholders to help evaluate what's working and adjust accordingly.	Megacities should conduct bi-annual review meetings with stakeholders to help evaluate what's working and adjust accordingly

Source: Author, 2025

CONCLUSION

Nigeria's urban planning is gradually changing from the use of rigid Master Plans toward more flexible and inclusive alternatives due to the failure of traditional plans to keep up with rapid urban development, informal settlements, and sustainability needs. Master Plans have proven ineffective because they are too rigid, costly, poorly implemented, and lack public input. In response, newer approaches like Strategic Spatial Planning, Structure Plans, Local Development Plans, zoning regulations, and participatory methods are gaining more popularity. Cities such as Enugu, Lagos, and Kaduna are already using these tools to better address their urban issues. However, challenges such as weak institutions, insufficient funding, political interference, and a lack of skilled professionals still remain. To tackle these issues, Nigeria must also improve governance, build institutional capacity, and actively involve concerned communities especially those in informal settlements in the development control process. Ultimately, adopting these alternative planning approaches offers a more realistic and effective path to building livable, resilient, and equitable cities across Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To support a successful move towards better development control in Nigeria, the following actions are recommended:

1. **Review and Update Planning Laws:** The current Urban and Regional Planning Act should be fully revised to officially support the use of alternative tools like Strategic Spatial Plans, Structure Plans, Action Area Plans, and Local Development Plans. This revision should aim to remove gray areas, simplify approval processes, and give state and local governments more power to use the tools that best suit their needs.

2. **Invest in Training and Skill Building:** More money and effort should go into training urban planners and professionals at all government levels and in universities. Training programs should cover modern planning ideas, how to use new tools, involve communities, and apply technologies like GIS. Continuous learning programs should also help professionals stay updated.

3. **Strengthen Planning Institutions:** Government agencies responsible for planning need better staff, more technical know-how, and more funding. Their roles should be clearly defined, and better frameworks for working together across agencies should be put in place to support effective planning.

4. **Make Public Participation a Standard Practice:** community development must become a required and essential part of all planning activities. Governments should create clear procedures and provide funding for involving the public, ensuring that their feedback contributes to the final decisions. This is especially important for developing and carrying out Local Development Plans.

5. **Develop a National Urban Development Policy:** Even though Nigeria has had urban policies before, a strong and well-implemented national policy is needed to promote sustainable urban development. This

policy should encourage flexible planning, support environmental protection, and address the needs of informal communities. Recent updates to the policy are a step in the right direction.

6. **Focus on Sustainable and Resilient Cities:** Urban planning should always include principles of sustainability and the ability to cope with climate change. This involves promoting green infrastructure, public transport, efficient use of resources, and planning for natural disasters.

7. **Tackle Informal Settlements with Upgrading, Not Eviction:** Instead of displacing residents, development control should aim to improve informal areas by providing services and better integrating them into the city. Participatory planning is key to making sure that proposed plans fit the local conditions.

8. **Encourage Partnerships and Collaboration:** Governments should work with the private sector, civil society, schools, and communities to solve urban problems. Public-private partnerships can help fund and carry out projects like infrastructure and affordable housing.

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