

ISSUES IN LAND USE ALLOCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Land is a free gift of nature. It is a property which ownership is protected by the constitution. In Nigeria, most cities are not planned. It is also clear that traditional land development has not lead to fully satisfactory land use allocation. Hence, the needs for continuing land use allocation and regulation. This paper discussed the impact of land use allocation in Nigeria. Specially discussed are the aim and objectives of land use allocation, the impact of land use allocation, approaches to urban land use allocation and typical land allocation to various uses. Based on the identified impacts, possible recommendations were made, which include among others – which adequate and standard facilities and services be provided to make the residential function efficiently in a modern society.

Introduction

Land is a private property, its ownership and use is protected by the constitution (farmer and Gibb, 1979). It is the free gift of nature to mankind. Every activity of man as of necessity takes place on land and as a result of increased activities there arose conflicts in different land uses. One land use tends to succeed another, where this is no control of such succession and use. Ratcliff (1999) states that succession of land use for its own sake is hardly desirable and change in advance of the appropriate time will only contribute to the inefficiency of the urban structure. He also argued that there are times when succession appear to lag behind the needs of the community, when actually, the fundamental factors that call for a readjustment of land uses are not present. Thus, the need for spatial ordering of land use with a view to creating functionally efficient and aesthetically pleasing environment for living, circulation and recreation, becomes imperative.

The creation of a balanced land use system (urban equilibrium), that is, the provision of adequate land for the various land uses, consistent with the creation of functionally efficient physical environment, is the objective of the land use allocation. Land use allocation is to ensure the best utilization of land in the national interest, and to prevent individual land owners from using that land to the detriment of body politic (Lawal, 2000).

This is inspite of their common law right to develop their land, as they like, provided they do not cause any nuisance or interfere with the rights of others. Land use allocation necessarily has to do with the siting of buildings and communication routes with objectives of achieving equilibrium between convenience, beauty and cost. According to Nwanekezie (2009): It determines where new industries should be located, how raw materials can be transported to

them, and their products distributed to market, where the employees should live, how they would get to work, where schools and other institutions should be situated.

The basic principle of allocation is that adequate land should be set aside for each uses at the onset in appropriate locations pending the time they will be needed and or funds will be available for their provision or development. This is because, it takes at least ten to twenty years to fully develop a residential neighborhood for instance, and it is not possible to provide at the initial stage of development all the facilities and services proposed in a layout plan even if money is not a constraint. Their provision of development is normally spread over time to keep pace with the development states of the neighbourhood.

Aim and objectives of Land Use Allocation

Most cities in Nigeria and other developing countries were not planned (Nwanekezie, 2009). They started as villages or trade centres before increasing in size to a big city today. Such process of city growth has been marked with haphazard development, poor planning, urban sprawl and environmental degradation. Business districts often spill over into the surrounding residential and industrial areas. The variety of growth and changing pattern of land use found in different cities complicate the process of identifying simple principles that govern the allocation of urban land uses.

Barlower (1978) states that urban land use allocation has been designed to promote the orderly development of the nations land resources, minimize certain problems and conflict associated with private use, foster the optimum development of the land – resource base and maximize the public welfare. Barlowe (1978) and Oyebanji (2003) have identified the objectives of urban land use allocation to include:

- i. **Social:** - This is to make life in a community more attractive by providing resources, opportunities and facilities within an area to enable and encourage good quality of life and pleasant environment for inhabitants.
- ii. **Management:-** These include formulation of good maintenance and control strategies that ensures attainment of a set standard of efficiency through appropriate administrative, legal, technical and operational instruments to minimize certain problems and conflicts which are usually associated with land ownership and usage.
- iii. **Development and infrastructure:-** These are to promote orderly development of the land resources, provide for potential growth of an area in a pattern which reflects social, environmental, economic, financial and management goals. It re-organizes the activities and provides improved social amenities and community facilities like transport, health etc.
 - i. **Environmental:-** It is preserving, protecting and enhancing the natural historic and man made environment by providing a high

quality structural environment through sound land use allocation, development and economic growth.

- v. **Economic and Financial:-** To strengthen the economic base and stimulates sound economic growth by ensuring the efficient use of economic resources available within an environment or settlement. It also fosters optimum development of land resource base, to ensure maximum welfare package for the people.

The impact of Land Use Allocation

The benefits and effects of a purposeful, functional and deliberate allocation of land to various use and highlighted by Harrey (1981) and Oyebanji (2003) include:

- i. It serves as a basis for describing the land use pattern of individual communities in comparism with what obtains in other places. Necessary corrective measures can thereafter be taken for enhanced efficiency.
- ii. The value of an individual site is affected by the restriction of building density. In essence, such restriction limits the amount of capital, which can be applied to a given site.
- iii. It alters the pattern of land values. It restrict the amount of land available for offices, raises the values of existing office land and thus of any land which in the future is given planning consent for offices.
- iv. It shifts land values and cause the value of land in the urban area to fall. They affect the aggregate value and hence allocation efficiency.
- v. It has both direct and indirect distributional effects which may clash with the economic efficiency objectives.
- vi. It is an avenue for sorting out units of land use into groups whose members have definable features in common.
- vii. It forms the basis for the observation of all existing land uses with a view to knowing the trends of development and land utilization in any country.
- viii. It offers recipe for successful planning activities against disaster land degradation and other environmental problems.
- ix. It is useful in carrying out necessary survey in respect of all existing land uses with a view to checking haphazard development and making adequate provision for adequate supporting services.
- x. It helps immensely in the determination and enhancement of land values.

Approaches to Urban Land Use Allocation

Onokerhoraye and Omuta (1994); Lawal (2000) and Oyebanji (2000) have identified three major ways of allocating land to urban uses. These include:

1. **Development Control:** - This is designed to regulate the growth of a settlement in a planned and orderly manner. Development control has two mechanisms or technical devices used in the control process. They include:

- a. **Land Use Zoning:** - This is the practice of defining certain areas on the map to be reserved for certain land use and not for other. An area could be zoned commercial-for instance, in such case any application to develop a non-commercial activity would be refused. This technique of development control was popular under the development planning system where development plans were to a great extent, land use zone plans and the refusal of application for non-conforming uses was often made on this basis. With the introduction of structure planning and its more flexible position and strategic approach, the use of land zoning mechanism for development control has diminished.
- b. **Planning Standard:-** Efficient urban land use allocation of a country, town, city, district or neighborhood can be achieved by stipulating adequate standards for all aspect of development. The planning standards are either prescriptive or regulatory. Prescriptive standards are used to insure that there will be adequate play ground for children open spaces for relaxation and recreation.

It also ensures that residential, commercial, industrial, educational and agricultural areas are properly and carefully located to prevent conflicts and promote a harmonious interrelationship. Regulatory standard are used to ensure that there will be adequate daylighting, ventilation, sun lighting, car parking, plot ratio or coverage density etc. planning standards are widely used as regulatory mechanism to ensure that development is in accordance with certain minimum standards. Such minimum standards are often defined in subsidiary planning legislations as regulations or by-laws.

- ii. **Planning Schemes:-** This is a second approach to urban land allocation, which relates to the preparation of scheme of actions on any part of a city declared as planning area. This type of scheme usually specifies uses and regulates overall development in a particular area. It could involve establishment of separate residential estate, shopping complex, new town, mechanic village, industrial centres and a host of other land uses. It may also entail provision of basic infrastructure to ensure comfort living, easy movement and for the eradication of certain social vices and diseases. For example housing estates or new town or satellite town can be established to minimize shortage of accommodation and congestion in an urban centre. In addition, overhead bridges, fly-over, and ring roads and dual carriage – ways can be constructed to tackle traffic problems within a city centre.

- iii. **Master Plan:-** This is usually prepared in order to provide a general guide for the development of a city and to further serve as development policy guide to both public and private developers. It is therefore, necessary for a master plan to be prepared for every town or city with the aim of allocating its land space to major uses.

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In its preparation, the inter-relationship of the uses and socio-economic implications of one use in relation to others are duly considered in a master plan. It is a futuristic positive approach to land use in a given city or region with a view to assigning every area to types and form of uses like housing circulation, utilities, services, open space and general design.

Typical Land Allocation to Various Uses

The typical land allocation to various uses could be assigned to the following:

a. Residential Layout:- A neighbourhood is the minimum planning unit desirable for the development of residential areas. It is the area within which residents may all share the common services, social activities and facilities required in the vicinity of the dwellings. The population of neighborhoods according to Farmer and Gibb (1979) vary from 2,000 to 8,000 requiring land areas of 20 – 100 hectares. The density of the development being the primary determining factor.

The figures in table 1, below serve only as a guide for land allocation in a residential neighbourhood. As these do not represent minimum and maximum standards, there may be reasonable variations from them.

Table 1
Land Allocation in a Residential Neighborhood.

Land Use	Percentage (%)
Residential (housing) plots	50-60
Roads and streets	15-25
Commercial	3-5
Recreation	6-8
Utilities, facilities & services	10-15

Source: Farmer and Gibb (1979)

b. Commercial Layouts:- In commercial layout plans, at least 45-50% of the land to be developed should be allocated to road and vehicular parking and at least 10% to recreation and public utilities. This means that the land areas (building plots) put to actual commercial use should not exceed 40-45% of the land area. A small commercial layout for a neighborhood shopping centre or market requires at least 1.5 hectares (Farmer and Gibb, 1979).

c. Industrial Layouts:- The minimum land area required for modern industrial estate is about 20 hectares (Farmer and Gibb, 1979). Of these, 30-40% should be allocated to roads and vehicular parking. This implies that not more than 50-60% of the entire layout land should be committed to actual industrial uses.

Conclusion

It is clear that the traditional land development has not lead to fully satisfactory land use allocation. There is a need for continuing land use allocation and regulation, as well as for reform in the process of using land. Traditionally, the urban planner has approached the problem via the physical master land use and transportation plan or the comprehensive plan.

The former attempted to lay out future patterns of land use in response to projected needs and a perceived community consensus as to the ideal urban environment. Some of these plans had, and continued to have, major impacts on subsequent development while others have had little apparent effect. The land use allocation, now usually part of more comprehensive urban plan, remains as the primary planning vehicle for land use planning. Zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, and other rules provide the implementation component. However, the emphasis is shifting from the physical plan to more rational regulation of the process.

Recommendations

Based on the identified impacts of land use allocation in Nigeria, the following recommendations are hereby proffered.

1. Adequate and standard facilities and services should be provided to make the residential area function efficiently in a modern society.
2. In a commercial layout plans, at least 45-50% of the land to be developed should be allocated to road and vehicular parking.
3. Again, at least 10% should also be allocated to recreation and public utilities – meaning that the land area (building plots) for commercial use should not exceed 40-45% of the total land or area. 30-40% should be allocated to road and vehicular parking.

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