THE RETURN OF THE ‘GREENS’ IN ABUJA

By

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INTRODUCTION

- The Master Plan provision of Green Areas within the Federal Capital City, (FCC),
- The Concept of Open spaces and Green Areas,
- The total land area of the City – 250sq km,
- Total land area for phase I of FCC – 7076 ha,
- Total for ‘Greens’ – 1260 ha
Green overview Phase I

Provisions of the Master Plan

- Basic Concept-
  - ‘neighbourhood’
  - Residential enclave
  - 5,000 threshold population
  - Served with common facilities

- Green Areas provided for in the Master Plan
  - Developable Green
    - Open spaces
    - Recreational facilities
    - Parks and gardens
    - Children playgrounds
Provisions of the Master Plan

- Out door games
- Sport centres
- National, district/neighbourhood parks
  - Undevelopable ‘green’
    - Green stretches along valleys
    - Riverbeds
    - Hilly patches and Some incidental open spaces
- Concept of ‘undevelopable green area’ does not
  - Connote lack of technology
  - Or ‘finacial muscles’ by ‘would-be-developers’

Why do we need ‘greens’

- Habitable
- Beautification
- Conservation
  - Created to protect
    - Hill - tops
    - Hill – sides
    - Streams’ / rivers’ courses in their natural form
- Tempering with them could result in
  - Generating soil erosion
  - Land slides
  - Deforestation and their effects on the natural ecology of the environment
  - Climate protection
How it all started

- Parks & Gardens - A unit under the department of planning and architecture of the Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA) in the early 1980s
- First park of the City of Abuja developed along ‘ring road one’
- Activities became more pronounced in 1985, with the establishment of Abuja Environmental Protection Board (AEPB)
- AEPB took over functions of parks and gardens unit

Selected parks & open spaces within FCC phase 1

- These are categorised in the ‘urban design’ of the FCC as:-
  - Street spaces
  - Three arms gardens
  - Green buffer zone in the ‘three arms zone’
  - Ministries garden
  - National Mall
  - National square/City square
  - Green areas in the cultural zone
  - Courtyards in Ministries’ zone and the CBD zone
  - Green zones along express ways
Selected parks & open spaces within FCC phase 1

- As at 1998 AEPB had leased out 41 organised open spaces to various developers and some NGOs within Phase I of the FCC.
- The leases for 5 years with certain conditions as follows:-
  - Not more than 25% to be devoted to light commercial activities
  - No permanent or residential structures
- ‘Central Area Urban Design’ of FCC by Kenzo Tange provided for the following as closely ‘inter-related elements and categorised them as:-
  - Open spaces,
  - Landscaping and vista planning
Selected parks & open spaces within FCC phase 1

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What went wrong?

- AEPB overwhelmed by other responsibilities such as management of Garbage, Sewage
- Inadequate funding
- Activities of the operators of urban informal sectors
- Slow phase of development within other phases of the City

What went wrong?

- Initial desire of Government to ‘go-it-alone’
- Unwillingness of private and corporate organisations to participate in such ventures
- Abuses of the provisions by the few that initially ventured into the development of such areas
The nature of the abuse
The nature of the abuse

By the 1990s, phase 1 FCC stretched beyond acceptable limit.

A study in 1999 recommended the reversal of the dangerous trend.

Though most recommendations are often accepted by Government authorities, lack of strong political will prevented the implementations.

By 2003, it was clear that the situation could not be allowed any further without harming the city and its dwellers.

Task team on ‘greening’ of Abuja was set up – later became Department of Parks and Recreation.

The turning point
The turning point

Recovered park: The Millenium Park
Recovered park: Suez park in Wuse District

A street in Asokoro District
Children’s Park & Zoo

The journey so far

- The clearance of virtually all shops and other structure located in green and open spaces
- Clearance of squatters that have invaded road corridors / reservations
- Securing all the recovered areas by way of fencing and planting of trees, shrubs and other ornamental flowers
- Partnership with private concerns in developing and managing these parks and open spaces
Challenges

- So far the ‘greens’ are returning to the city landscape of Abuja
- This has been done at a great cost
- The tempo has slowed down since 2007 as result of
  - Wide spread out cry of the demolishing exercise
  - Change of administration within the FCTA
  - Misunderstanding between the authorities and private developers of these facilities

The way forward

- Cooperation is needed between Government agencies and private concerns
- Strict controls must also be put in place to prevent land use conversion as it affects green areas of the City
- Much longer lease period of between 40 – 60 years is recommended
- Strong enforcement of rules and regulations needed to prevent future abuse
Conclusion

- So far the ‘greens’ are returning to the city landscape of Abuja
- Not all within the Phase 1 will come back
- Can the tempo of 2003 – 2007 be sustained?
- In developing the remaining phases of the City of Abuja, can we avoid the mistakes of the past?

The return of the ‘greens’ in Abuja

Thank You!