



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



Assessing government plan and residents' support for agropolitan housing development in the Greater Port Harcourt city, River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examined, why the Rivers State Government of Nigeria engaged in the Greater Port Harcourt city project as well as individual communities' residents' attitudes in support or against government demand of communities' land for agropolitan residential housing development in the GPH city. Survey questionnaire retrieved from 258 heads of households in 8 selected communities of the Greater Port Harcourt city and key informants' responses were the methods used. The result shows that Greater Port Harcourt City was born to contain and curtail the spill over population, provide good and quality infrastructure and services, upgrade informal settlements and create sustainable residential developments. Respondents' attitude towards land acquisition for self-sustainable agropolitan residential housing development was positive and supportive with modal first to three mention of "More persons will own better homes (27.3%), it will enable me own my personal house (18.2%) and it will solve the housing problem in the area (16.3%) respectively'.

Keywords: Sustainable Development; Agropolitan; Sustainable Housing; Greater Port Harcourt; Residents' Support

1. Introduction

The greatest potential for sustainable growth of rural settlements globally lies in the agricultural sector but this is reasonably ironical that the sector in the south-south region of Nigeria is bewildered with the most widespread level of poverty, lack of investment and underdevelopment. Residents and small-scale farmers of rural/ peri-urban communities therefore suffer from access to sustainable housing and good quality of life due to low risk-taking ability and low investment, which leads to low productivity, low market orientation and low value addition which, in turn, nets low margins [13]. The provision of sustainable and affordable housing that cuts across a wide range of incomes has therefore become a major concern among residents, businesses, elected officials, and many community stakeholders and decision makers, globally. Sustainable housing deficiency is a major problem that potentially affects economic development, education, land use, health, business, neighborhood vitality, the environment, transportation, and other aspects of the community.

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2. Literature Review

The official introduction of housing provision intervention in Nigeria dates back to the colonial administration after the unfortunate outbreak of the bubonic plague of 1928 in Lagos. This led to the establishment of the Lagos Executive Development Board (LEDB) that signified the ushering of Nigerian public housing programmes intervention [17]; [2]. The policies were modest with the ultimate aim of addressing the housing problem at a national scale [15]; not at a state or local government scale. The policy focus then, was on the provision of expatriate quarters [16] and some housing for selected indigenous staff in the Railways, Marine, Police and Armed Forces [2]. The construction of senior civil servant quarters in the capital city of Lagos and regional headquarters like Kaduna, Ibadan and Enugu were some of the practical efforts made and at the same time some form of rent subsidy and housing loans were provided [3]. Most of the housing delivery programs in Nigeria are rarely sustainable since they lack the basic elements of sustainability. [18] asserted that the 20th century saw a lot of failed attempts by the Nigerian government to deliver affordable housing to a majority of her citizens, and worse still for the “No and Low income” groups. [1] argues that housing policies have not been able to meet set targets of affordable housing delivery to the low-income groups and with the high population growth rate and unprecedented unemployment, the insignificant response by government makes the housing deficit more cumbersome. [12] further stated that non availability of mortgage loans, high interest rates, inadequate infrastructure and difficulties in obtaining building plan approvals and Certificates of Occupancy (C of O) are some factors responsible for the failure of housing policies and programmes in delivering affordable housing to the “No and Low income” groups in Nigeria (as defined in the 2012 Housing Policy Document). According to [6], the idea of affordable and sustainable housing aims to improve the quality of life of individuals as the first step to improve their quality of life for stability, safe and healthy environment with basic services and considers the needs of households whose incomes are not sufficient to allow them to access appropriate housing in the market without assistance at a reasonable price in the short and long term. [6] went ahead to state that sustainable housing targets economic, social and environmental sustainability from planning to implementation and that the most salient characteristics of sustainable development are: 1. Helping the poor. 2. The idea of cost-effective development, which means that development should not cause deterioration in environmental quality, nor should it at the same time reduce productivity in the long term. 3. Disease control issues, food security, clean water and shelter for all. 4. Community participation. Therefore, in order to be sustainable, housing initiatives must be economically, socially acceptable, affordable, technologically feasible and environmentally friendly.

With the goal of creating not just sustainable housing, but entire communities that support it, Agropolitan Housing Development which was from a concept proposed by [10] became a means. Agropolitan Housing is a housing development associated with agro-based development meets the objectives of social housing provision [5]. The introduction of this type of social housing thus demands the collaboration of innovative thinkers and recognized leaders, policy makers, philanthropists, developers, business leaders, nonprofits organizations, financiers, city officials, attorneys, and many more who are interested and driven by a collective desire to transform communities, improve the lives of residents of under-served neighborhoods, end a cycle of intergenerational poverty, and set a new course for cities across countries [4]. On this experience, the Rivers State government of Nigeria in 2008 embarked on a vision of building a thriving, economically vibrant and diverse world class competitive and attractive model Garden cum Tourism city with emboldened conscious land use activities that will make its residents enjoy an enviable quality of life, sustainable development, security and good health with enhanced viable economic global integration. The cumulative area for the new city spans eight Local Government Areas of Rivers State, namely- the entire Port Harcourt Municipality and parts of Obio/Akpor, Ikwerre, Etche, Oyigbo, Eleme, Ogu/ Bolo and Okrika Local Government Areas which in total covers an area of approximately 1,900 square kilometres (9,190,000 hectares of land) and to house a projected population of about two million people [9]. This prompted the preparation of a master plan to co-ordinate and integrate a number of projects in the direction of the overall vision. A South African firm by name Arcus GIBB was consulted and appointed for this purpose and the Greater Port Harcourt City Master Plan was prepared. The plan focused to address two prevailing issues which were i. to engage in the activities of urban renewal and transformation of the older city and ii. the building of a new city for the 21st century with high urban quality and planned open spaces that will become a worthy global player that will be an example to other African countries [11]. The Greater Port Harcourt City Development Authority (GPHCDA) was then established on the 2nd of April 2009 by the Greater Port Harcourt City Development Law No. 9 of Rivers State, Nigeria. The GPHCDA was established as a regulatory body with mandate to facilitate the implementation of the Greater Port Harcourt City Master Plan and build the New City called the Greater Port Harcourt City. From the day of its establishment till date, several development proposals and projects have been rolled out; all demanding for the grasp of available land space. One of such is the Public Private Partnership arrangement for the creation of an inclusive and self-sustainable agropolitan residential housing development that will be operated on a private sector model which will successfully engage even the poorest of the poor and provide access to decent affordable housing, employment and revenue generation through conscious involvement in agriculture, light support industries, real estate activities, power generation and distribution, waste management and recycling. The project is an all-inclusive and sustainable agropolitan enclave, to be located in an area zoned for future residential development in

the Greater Port Harcourt City Master Plan at the Etche-Oyigbo extensions. The objective, first, is to provide affordable housing for members of the target group and then create sustainable, mainly agro-based livelihoods, which will enable beneficiaries to painlessly take care of their housing and other needs. A secondary motive is to create an iconic residential skyline to complement the proposed beautiful townscape of Greater Port Harcourt City. The site will have easy access to the rest of the new city to take advantage of the latter's proposed robust facilities. The target group are young unmarried, newly married without children, the married with young children and generally, energetic people who are willing to make a living in integrated farming, entailing such aspects as livestock production, poultry farming, pig farming, snailry, rabbitry, apiculture, aquaculture and floriculture. Participants of the self-sustainable agropolitan residential housing development must fall within the income groups of "No income" (less than the minimum wage of ₦30,000 monthly), "Low Income" (₦30,000 to ₦60,000 monthly and "Lower Middle" (₦61,000 -90,000 monthly).

3. Statement of the problem

In Nigeria, housing deficit is glaring in both rural, peri-urban and urban areas. Delivery of what the 2012 National Housing Policy Document described as Social Housing is still a challenge. Much of what has been described and provided by the government as "low-cost housing estate" is inefficient in the distribution and unsustainable. Rivers state government with a goal to reduce homelessness has in different regimes and government tenures and currently under the Rivers State Housing and Property Development Authority (RSHPDA) provided and managed residential housing estates which mostly are concentrated in the capital city Port Harcourt and some at its peri-urban settlements currently embraced by the Greater Port Harcourt City. Most of these estates are not targeted towards the public but rather, government officials or workers. The housing need of the public has not been dealt with accordingly by the government leaving the challenge to be operated by private investors at the detriment of the public. There is therefore unprecedented homelessness among the 'No-income', 'Low-income and Lower-medium income' groups in the Greater Port Harcourt City area.

Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to assess government strategy of building sustainable residential communities and residents' support for agropolitan housing development in the Greater Port Harcourt City, Rivers State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the research are to:

- Ascertain the Rivers State government reason for the establishment of the Greater Port Harcourt City
- Ascertain individual communities' residents' attitudes in support of government's desire and demand of communities' land for agropolitan residential housing development in the GPH city.
- Ascertain residents perceived benefits of agropolitan residential housing development in the GPH city
- Ascertain individual communities' residents' attitudes against government's desire and demand of communities' land for agropolitan residential housing development in the GPH city.

4. Description of the study area (Greater Port Harcourt City)

Under the leadership of former Governor, Chibuike Amaechi, plans were announced for the creation of a new city to be called Greater Port Harcourt City. The total area of the Greater Port Harcourt City is 1,900 km², spanning all or parts of eight Local Government Areas in Rivers State, including Ogu Bolo, Eleme, Ikwerre, Etche, Obio/Akpor, Okrika and Okrika. (See *Figure 1 and 2*). The Greater Port Harcourt City Development Authority (GPHCDA) was established by law in April 2009 with a mandate to facilitate the implementation of the Greater Port Harcourt City Master Plan and build the new city. The Greater Port Harcourt City hosted several of the events at the 17th National Sports Festival tagged "Garden City Games" at the recently completed Adokiye Amiesimaka Stadium. Greater Port Harcourt City has a total land mass that spans eight (8) Local Government Areas namely, Port Harcourt City, Obio/Akpor, Etche, Ikwerre, Ogu Bolo, Eleme and Oyigbo. Total number of communities in the GPHC are 71 as shown in Table 1.

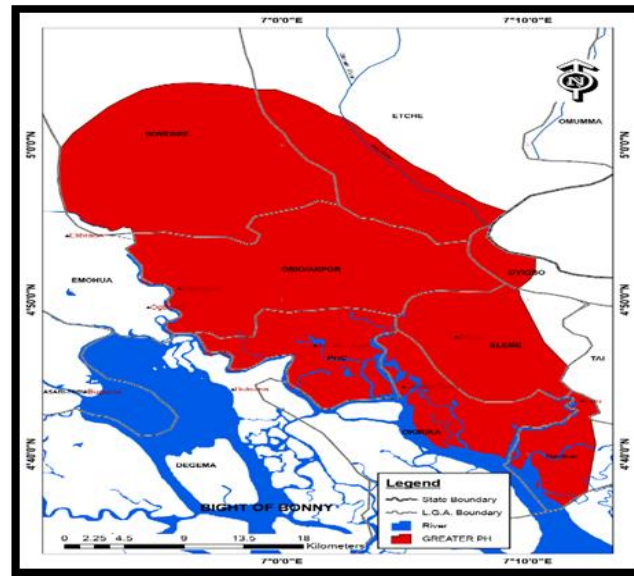


Figure 1 Map of Greater Port Harcourt City; (Source: [11])

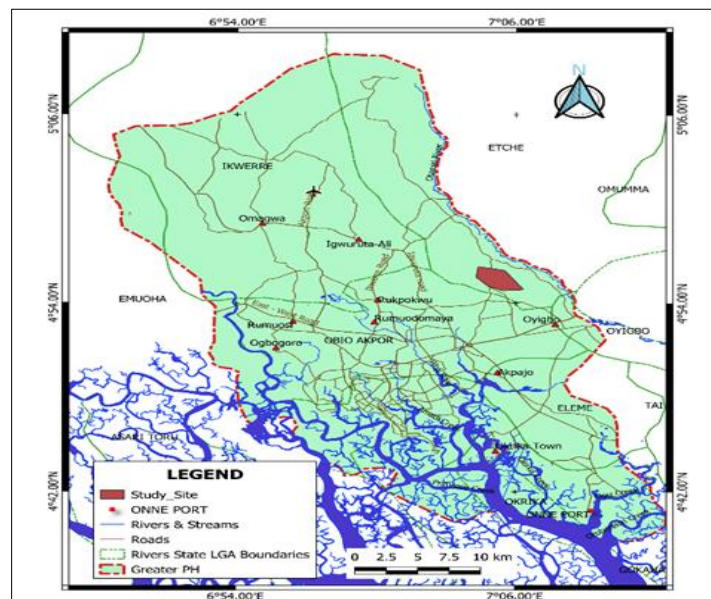


Figure 2 Map of Greater Port Harcourt City showing Proposed Site for Agropolitan Project; (Source: [11])

5. Research methodology

The population for which generalization was made concerning the result of this study is the sum total number of resident in the Greater Port Harcourt city area. Heads of households and relevant public officers served as the unit of analysis. The stratified multi-stage sampling procedure [14] was adopted for the extraction of sampled population of head of households in selected communities of GPHC (See Tables 1 and 2). Two stages were therefore involved.

Stage 1-- Obtaining a 10% (*a priori* decision) sample of the component communities of GPHC in each stratum. The number in each stratum was rounded to one whole number to ensure representation of each stratum.

Stage 2 --Obtaining the number of households to be studied after applying the [20] formula which aided the researcher to determine the appropriate number of cases to be studied at the precision level of 5%.

Mathematically the [20] formula was used as given by:

$$n = N / 1 + N (e^2) \dots \dots \dots (1)$$

Where,

n = Sample size
 N = Population size
 e = The assumed error margin or tolerable error which is taken as 0.05

Computation

$$n = 29,093 / 1 + 29,093(0.05^2) = 29,093 / 1 + 29,093(0.0025) = 29,093 / 1 + 72.7 = 29,093 / 73.7 = 395$$

Table 1 Sampling Details 1

S/No.	Local Govt. Area (Stratum)	Names of GPHC Communities	No. of GPHC Communities	10% Sample With Rounding
1	Port Harcourt Municipality	Port Harcourt Township, Rumuibekwe, Abuloma, Amadi-Ama, Diobu, Elakahia, Nkpolu Oroworukwo, Ruumukalagbor, Ogbunabali, Orogbum, Oromineke, Oroworukwo	12	1
2	Obio/ Akpor	Eneka, Rumuodomaya, Elenwo, Rukpokwu, Rumuosi, Iriebe, Rumuagholu, Ogbogoro, Elioizu, Rumuokwurusu	10	1
3	Etche	Igbo-Etche, Abara, Elele-Etche, Umuebulu, Chokocho, Ikwerengwo	6	1
4	Ikwerre	Igwuruta, Igwuruta-Ali Omagwa, Ipo, Aluu, Ozuoba, Omademe	7	1
5	Ogu-Bolo	Ogu Town, Bolo Town, Wakama, Agokien, Mbikiri, Owo-Ogono, Iwokiri	7	1
6	Okrika	Okrika, Okujagu, Abam-Ama, Omodara-Ama, Kalio, George, Obo, Ele, Ibuluya, Ogoloma, Donkiri, Mabegbeboko	12	1
7	Eleme	Nchia, Ebulu, Esama, Eteo, Onne, Ogale, Alode, Aletu, Akpajo, Alesa	10	1
8	Oyigbo	Oyigbo Town, Komkom, IzuomaAyama, Okoloma, Umusia, Iwuoma- Estate	7	1
	Total		71	8

Source: [11]

The representative number of cases for questionnaire administration was 395 heads of households. The systematic probability sampling [14] was applied to the ordered list of households in the 8 communities, which constituted the probability sampling frame. Since the sampling fraction was approximately 1%, a random start was made in the interval 1 - 100. Thereafter, every 100th case was picked until the probability sample size of 395 was achieved. There were 63 non-response cases, yielding a non-response rate of 16%. This translates to 332 valid cases but analysis will be based on percentage distribution of categories of respondents' monthly household income due to inclusiveness of the "no income", "low income" and "lower middle income" categories. Adopting the pragmatist philosophical approach known as pragmatism [19]; [8] which welcomes a mixed methodology, the study also engaged key informants interview (KII) of relevant public officials. This was achieved judgmentally by interviewing directors of Greater Port Harcourt City Development Authority and former staff of Arcus Gibbs.

Table 2 Sampling Details 2

S/N	Stratum	Names of Selected Communities	Population (1991 Census)	2019 Population (Projected @6.5% Annual Growth Rate)	Total No. of Households from listing	No. of Households from on Yamane formulae	Sampling %
1	Port Harcourt Municipality	Mgbundukwu (Mile 2 Diobu)	9,600	55,682	8,808	120	1.5
2	Obio/Akpor	Rumuodomaya	4,548	25,519	4,828	65	1.5
3	Etche	Abara	1,866	10,823	1,940	26	1.5
4	Ikwerre	Igwuruta-Ali	2,805	16,269	2,480	34	1.5
5	Ogu-Bolo	Wakama	2,717	15,759	2,266	31	1.5
6	Okrika	Okujagu	5,794	33,785	3,191	43	1.5
7	Eleme	Akpajo	5,195	30,298	3,092	42	1.5
8	Oyigbo	Okoloma	3,474	20,149	2,488	34	1.5
Total			35,999	208,284	29,093	395	1.5

Source: Researchers Conceptualization and 1991 NPC Population Projection, 2020

6. Findings of the study

6.1. Reasons for the Establishment of the Greater Port Harcourt City

Key informants (former Arcus Gibb staff members) presently working with the Rivers State government revealed that Greater Port Harcourt City was born to contain and curtail the spill over population, provide good and quality infrastructure and services, reduce traffic congestion and enhance flow, clean up the old Port Harcourt city in terms of refuse removal, define urban precincts and critical urban elements that improve urban form, de-densify residential cluttering, upgrade informal settlements, create sustainable residential and mixed land use developments and re-establish the garden city status.

The pioneer Administrator of the Authority states that the whole GPHC 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” [7].

Summation of responses from Directors in Greater Port Harcourt City Development Authority on the challenges faced in the acquisition of land for projects are as follows:

- The step for property acquisition in the GPHC is cumbersome
- Land had to be acquired from communities, body corporate, families and individuals who happens to claim ownership of the land.
- Compensation had to be paid before possession of the land
- There is serious need of funds and funding challenge from the Rivers State Government
- The local communities had to be involved in the survey and setting out process of the land
- Enough social mobilization had to take place in order to quell the interest of opposition parties

6.2. Respondents' Support for Development of Agropolitan Residential Housing Development

Since Agropolitan Housing Development is an inclusive project for the “no income”, “low income” and “lower middle income”, only respondents (and households) that fall into categories 1 to 4 in Table 3 (the shaded area, totaling 258) qualify for further analysis (with respect to opinions and perceptions of the Agropolitan Housing Development).

Table 3 Percent Distribution of Categories of Respondents' Monthly Household Income

S/No.	Income Category (₦)	N	%
1	Less than 30,000	70	21.1
2	30,000 - 49,999	62	18.7
3	50,000 - 69,999	59	17.8
4	70,000 - 99,999	67	20.2
5	100,000 - 129,999	38	11.4
6	130,000 - 159,999	28	8.4
7	160,000 - 189,999	4	1.2
	Missing data	4	1.2
Total		332	100

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, February, 2020

Although proper compensations were made for land acquisition, respondents show willingness to give out their property for the agropolitan residential housing development. Respondents were asked if they would support development of sustainable social housing in the area. The modal response was "Yes", accounting for 78.7% of the distribution.

Table 4 Reasons for the Support of Agropolitan Housing Development (Percentage Distribution of First, Second and Third Mentions)

S/No.	Reason	% First Mention (N=203)	% Second Mention (N=203)	% Third Mention (N=203)
1	The scheme will not work	3.2	0	0
2	It will help the low-income earners	15.0	12.8	7.3
3	It will enable me own my personal house	10.2	18.2	11.4
4	It will enable me provide accommodation for my children	3.2	7.4	4.9
5	It will create employment	2.7	2.0	5.7
6	More persons will own better homes	27.3	11.5	16.3
7	Affordable houses for all	4.3	17.6	2.4
8	It will lead to reduction in rent by landlords	2.7	7.4	11.4
9	People will stop paying rent instead paying for their personal homes	3.7	3.4	11.4
10	It will solve the housing problem in the area	25.7	5.4	16.3
11	It will help me move to a cleaner neighbourhood	1.1	9.5	7.3
12	New estate will decongest the neighbourhood	1.1	3.4	0
13	Instalment payment is good	0	1.4	2.4
14	The unemployed can take advantage of the opportunity	0	0	3.3
Total		100	100	100

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, February, 2020

Table 4 shows the modes among the first, second and third mentioned reasons which are as follows:

- Modal first mention: “More persons will own better homes” (27.3%)
- Modal second mention: “It will enable me own my personal house” (18.2%)
- Modal third mention: “It will solve the housing problem in the area” (16.3%)

6.3. Respondents’ Perceived Benefits of the Agropolitan Housing Development

Respondents were asked to state the perceived benefits of Agropolitan Housing Development. Their responses are detailed in Table 5. The modal first, second and third mentions were “Easy/Installment repayment plan” (9.9%), “Better Neighbours” (6.9%) and “Well planned estate” (4.6%).

Table 5 Perceived Benefits of Agropolitan Housing Development

S/No.	Item	First Mention (N=203)	Second Mention (N=203)	Third Mention (N=203)
		%	%	%
1	Easy Instalment payment	9.9	2.3	1.9
2	Peace of Mind	3.8	4.6	1.1
3	Well-planned estate	0	4.6	4.6
3	It will eliminate landlord and tenant problems	1.9	0	2.7
4	It will enable me plan well	1.9	0	0
5	I need my own accommodation as a young man	1.9	1.5	0
6	It will give me privacy	1.5	0	0.4
7	Youths can own homes early in their lives	4.2	1.5	1.1
8	Everything will be within the state	1.1	1.1	1.5
9	Employment will be provided	0	1.1	0.8
10	Low income earners can now own homes	0	2.7	1.1
11	Good environment	2.7	2.3	1.1
12	New and modern houses	3.8	4.6	3.5
13	Housing for all	2.3	0	0.4
14	Work and home will be close	3.1	0	2.3
15	Better neighbours	3.1	6.9	4.2
16	Basic amenities will be present	1.1	3.8	3.8
17	Security will be provided	0.8	0	5.0
18	Working and paying for the house is good	0	3.8	0
19	Recreational facility will be present	0	0.8	2.3
20	Missing Data	52.7	41.6	61.8
Total		100	100	100

(Source: Researcher’s Field Survey, February, 2020)

6.4. Perceived Disadvantages and Reasons for Not Supporting Agropolitan Housing Development

Table 6 shows the percentage distribution of Perceived Disadvantages and Reasons for Not Supporting Agropolitan Housing Development

Table 6 Perceived Disadvantages and Reasons for Not Supporting Agropolitan Housing Development

S/No.	Item	First Mention (N=55)	Second Mention (N=55)	Third Mention (N=55)
		%	%	%
1	It can distract one from building another house	0.8	0	0
2	The salary may not be good enough	0.4	0	0
3	Maintenance of estate will not be easy	0.8	0.4	1.5
3	Length of time to work to own a house will be long	4.6	0.8	0.4
4	The estate might be far from the city	0	2.7	0.4
5	No choice in terms of building design	0.4	1.1	2.7
6	Stigmatization (Low cost/ low income estate)	2.3	0.4	0
7	The programme might fail	0.4	1.5	0
8	I will be bound/ tied to the contract duration	0.8	0	0.8
9	Missing Cases	89.7	93.1	94.3
Total		100	100	100

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, February, 2020

The modal perceived disadvantages of the proposed agropolitan housing development for the first, second, and third mentions were; "Length of time to work to own the house will be long" (4.9%), "Estate may be far from the city" (2.7%) and "No choice in terms of building design" (2.7%), respectively.

7. Discussion of Findings

Building sustainable residential communities demands serious investment capital on land resources acquisition, property owners' compensation and public awareness and sensitization. Both primary data from heads of households and key informants; and secondary data all attest to the quantum of land need, positive behavior towards agropolitan housing development as a sustainable way for their area speedy development. Although, there are economic, socio-cultural, technical and environmental factors which poses challenges to land acquisition, the residents are willing and ready to give out their land for an inclusive and self-sustainable agropolitan residential housing development that will be operated on a private sector model which will successfully engage even the poorest of the poor and provide access to decent affordable housing, employment and revenue generation through conscious involvement in agriculture, light support industries, real estate activities, power generation and distribution, waste management and recycling.

8. Conclusion

This study has ascertained the reason why the Rivers State government established the Greater Port Harcourt City. It has also found out residents' attitudes in support for and against government's desire and demand of communities' land and their perceived benefits of agropolitan residential housing development within their locality. The findings indicate that Greater Port Harcourt City was born to contain and curtail the spill over population, provide good and quality infrastructure and services, reduce traffic congestion and enhance flow, de-densify residential cluttering, upgrade informal settlements and create sustainable residential and mixed land use developments. Most of the respondents' attitude towards land acquisition for self-sustainable agropolitan residential housing development was positive and supportive with modal first to three mention of "More persons will own better homes (27.3%), it will enable me own my personal house (18.2%) and it will solve the housing problem in the area (16.3%) respectively'. Top of residents

perceived benefits of agropolitan housing development were in the order of the modal first, second and third mentions which were “Easy/Installment repayment plan” (9.9%), “Better Neighbours” (6.9%) and “Well planned estate” (4.6%). It was of no doubt that some residents saw the development in a negative light and do not support for its implementation. Top of their reasons on the list of first, second, and third mentions were; “Length of time to work to own the house will be long” (4.9%), “Estate may be far from the city” (2.7%) and “No choice in terms of building design” (2.7%), respectively.

The study found out that firstly, more of the study area residents are in support of the agropolitan housing development. This means that there will be a strong community-government alliance in the implementation of the project. Secondly, when the residents are interested and in full awareness and participation in a project, it means that they will go all out and protect the project. The third implication is that, with the acceptance and motivation of the community, such project will rarely fail. Having a working knowledge of why some people are not in support of the project therefore become a guide against misbehavior on the part of the government, private partners and communities’ stakeholder groups.

Compliance with ethical standards

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Disclosure of conflict of interest

We do not have any conflict of interest.

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