

STAKEHOLDERS' ENGAGEMENT IN URBAN DEVELOPMENT CONTROL IN AKURE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluates stakeholders' engagement in urban development control in Akure, Nigeria with a view to promoting sustainable and livable human environments. The research examines the current state of urban development control practices and identifies relevant stakeholders involved. The study adopts the use of questionnaire survey and interviews to obtain relevant information from respondents while secondary data were sourced from existing literature and reports on urban development control in Akure. Three percent (3%) sample size were chosen out of the total household population of 10,710 in the nine (9) selected residential communities which amounted to 321 households that were served with copies of questionnaires. Besides, 5% of 560 registered professionals were selected for interview, amounting to 28 professionals. Data obtained were analyzed using descriptive and content analyses. The result of the findings show that development control is not effective in most part of the core area compared to the transition and peripheral part of the city. The study also shows that the involvement of stakeholder in development control plays vital role in the proper planning of the city. It was also established that stakeholders were majorly engaged through public meeting to solve problems related to land issues. However, the nature of the development usually determines the kind of stakeholder to be involved. Thus, the study suggested provision of planning tools, appropriate logistic, adequate funding, and provision of securities among others to enhance development control activities in the city.

Keywords: Stakeholders, engagement, urban development, development control, evaluation

DOI 10.51459/jostir.2025.1.2.016

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History

Received: 14-01-2025

Accepted: 08-05-2025

Published: 10/11/2025



<https://www.futa.edu.ng>



JOSTIR
JOURNAL OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY
AND INNOVATION RESEARCH
<https://jostir.futa.edu.ng>

1 | Introduction

Evaluating stakeholders' engagement in urban development control is crucial in ensuring effective participation, transparency, and accountability. In Nigeria, urban development control involves a complex interplay of various stakeholders, including government agencies, urban planners, developers, communities, and the private sector (Afolayan *et al*, 2020). These

stakeholders play critical roles in shaping urban landscapes and influencing policies that guide urban development. Consequently, balancing their interests and fostering collaboration is essential for sustainable urban growth. The Nigerian government has recognized the significance of effective urban development control and has embarked on various initiatives to address urbanization challenges. Stakeholder participation in policy

development is a critical ingredient in policy formulation and implementation. In the policy arena, stakeholders often refer to persons or groups who are directly or indirectly affected by policies. Stakeholders are also those who may have interests in the policies or have the ability to influence policy outcomes either positively or negatively (Organization for Economic Cooperation & Development (2019). Stakeholders include a wide array of actors from formal representatives across the levels of government to communities, regulators, businesses, civil society organizations, the academic community, multinational agencies, and development partners (Akinwande, 2024).

Studies that have considered resources utilized within policy formulation in Nigeria commonly report that policies in the country are often sub-optimal in their achievements. They suffer poor implementation, which partly is a function of the level of stakeholder's involvement in the formulation and implementation of policies (Popoola, 2016; Akinwande, 2024). The uneven involvement of stakeholders in urban development projects is a reflection of the reality that democracy is frequently more idealistic than practical. Besides, policymakers face enormous challenges in addressing the diverse interests, values, and objectives that are inherent among stakeholders due to the complex situation of rapid population growth, large net migration, irreversible climate change, energy and resource limitations in the country, and the influences of the global economy (Akinwande, 2024). Therefore, there is a conundrum for those involved in urban development regarding which stakeholders' opinions should have a place at the table of both project teams and decision-makers. It is critical to combine and offer practical stakeholder analysis techniques that can be used in the field of urban development to efficiently gather a complete picture of stakeholders' concerns and manage animosity, prejudice, and conflicts amongst

stakeholders (Akinwande, 2024). The purpose of this study, therefore, is to examine the current state of urban development control in Akure and relevant stakeholders' involvement in decision-making and implementation to provide responses to the two research questions set for the study, which are:

1. What is the condition of current development control practices in Akure?
2. What are the stakeholders' involvements in urban development in the study area?

2. | Literature Perspectives

Stakeholder theory has immense importance not only in organization or management but also in providing suitable conceptual framework for understanding and analyzing the relationships and interactions among relevant investors. The theory posits that organizations or projects have a responsibility to a broader set of stakeholders who can influence or are affected by their actions (Freeman, 1984). They are individuals or groups that have vested interests in an organization or project and can significantly impact or be impacted by its activities. In urban development control, stakeholders include government agencies, local communities, private developers, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academic institutions, media and the judiciary. However, the theory emphasizes the importance of considering the interests, perspectives, and contributions of relevant stakeholders in decision-making processes and overall project outcomes. It advocates for a more inclusive and participatory approach to governance and management, recognizing the diverse interests and concerns of different stakeholders in shaping urban development policies and practices (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Akinwande, 2024). This provides a comprehensive lens to examine the relationships

and dynamics among stakeholders and their impact on decision-making processes and urban development outcomes.

Urban development control plays a critical role in shaping the sustainable and inclusive development of cities. The involvement and engagement of stakeholders are essential for effective urban development control. Stakeholders in urban development control in Africa encompass a diverse range of actors, including local communities, government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private developers, academic institutions, and international organizations (Oyelaran-Oyeyinka, Akeju *et al.*, 2017; Turok, 2019). These stakeholders have distinct roles and interests in urban development processes and collectively influence decision-making.

International organizations and agencies also play critical roles in urban development control in Africa. They provide financial and technical support, capacity building, and policy advice to governments and other stakeholders (Turok, 2019). However, their involvement can sometimes be associated with challenges related to power dynamics and the imposition of external agendas (Parnell & Pieterse, 2017). Several case studies provide insights into stakeholder engagement in urban development control in specific African cities. For example, in Nairobi, Kenya, community-driven initiatives have successfully influenced urban planning decisions and improved living conditions in informal settlements (Musyoka *et al.*, 2020). Similarly, in Accra, Ghana, NGOs and academic institutions have collaborated with communities to address urban poverty and promote sustainable development (Aboagye & Owusu, 2017).

Stakeholders' role in urban development control in the African context underscores the importance of their participation in shaping sustainable and

inclusive cities. However, to enhance stakeholder engagement in urban development control in African cities, policymakers should prioritize the inclusion of marginalized communities, establish clear legal frameworks, and create platforms for meaningful participation (Caulfield & Maulid, 2019). Strengthening collaboration between stakeholders, fostering transparency, and ensuring effective governance structures are essential for sustainable urban development (Simon & Pieterse, 2018).

Urban development in Nigeria is experiencing significant challenges and opportunities due to rapid population growth, urbanization, and the need for sustainable development. Effective urban development control requires the active participation and engagement of various stakeholders. For example, Local communities prioritize access to affordable housing, improved infrastructure, and a healthy living environment (Aliyu & Ahmed, 2020). It also provides invaluable knowledge of their neighborhoods, cultural heritage, and community needs (Adelekan, 2019; Okwuashi, 2019). Government agencies focus on economic growth, efficient land use planning, and infrastructure development (Okechukwu & Ikediashi, 2022). They also formulate urban policies, provide regulatory frameworks, and oversee development projects (Oyebanji & Adeyemi, 2020). NGOs and academic institutions emphasize social equity, environmental sustainability, and community empowerment and contribute through research, capacity building, and advocacy for sustainable urban development (Ayodele *et al.*, 2021; Okorie, 2017).

The key indicators of effective evaluation strategies on stakeholders' engagement include: number and diversity of stakeholders engaged, frequency and quality of stakeholder interactions, level of stakeholder satisfaction, influence of

stakeholder input on decisions, conflict resolution rate, participation rate in decision-making, transparency and accessibility of information, stakeholder capacity and empowerment (Meta AI, 2024). The thrust of this study, however, is to examine the current state of urban development control in Akure and investigate the involvement of relevant stakeholders in decision-making and policy implementation towards achieving sustainable and livable urban environments.

3. | Materials and Methods

3.1 | Research Location

Akure is a city in the south-western Nigeria, the administrative headquarter of the **Akure** South LGA and the capital of Ondo State, Nigeria (Akinbode *et al.*, 2023). The city had population figure of 403,000 as at the 2006 population census. It lies within Latitudes $7^{\circ}09'$ and $7^{\circ}19'$ North of the Equator and Longitudes $5^{\circ}07'$ and $5^{\circ}17'$ East of the Greenish Meridian (Northing 790820 – 809277 mN and Easting 733726 – 752139 mE, UTM Minna Zone 31 (NPC, 2006). It is about 700 km (430 mi) southwest of Abuja and 311 km (193 mi) north of Lagos State. Residential districts are of varying density. Some areas like Arakale, Ayedun, Ijoka, and Oja-Oba consist of over 201 inhabitants per hectare, while areas like Ijapo Estate, Alagbaka Estate, Avenue and Idofin have between 60 and 100 inhabitants per hectare (Ileh, 2024). The town is situated in the tropical rainforest zone in Nigeria. Afolabi (2008) stated that Akure has a long history predating British colonial rule. Situated within Ondo State in the South Western region of Nigeria, Akure serves as a medium-sized urban center. In 1939, it became the provincial headquarters of Ondo province, and in 1976, it was designated as the capital city of Ondo State and a local government headquarters (Afe, 2012). The study area is shown in Figure 1.

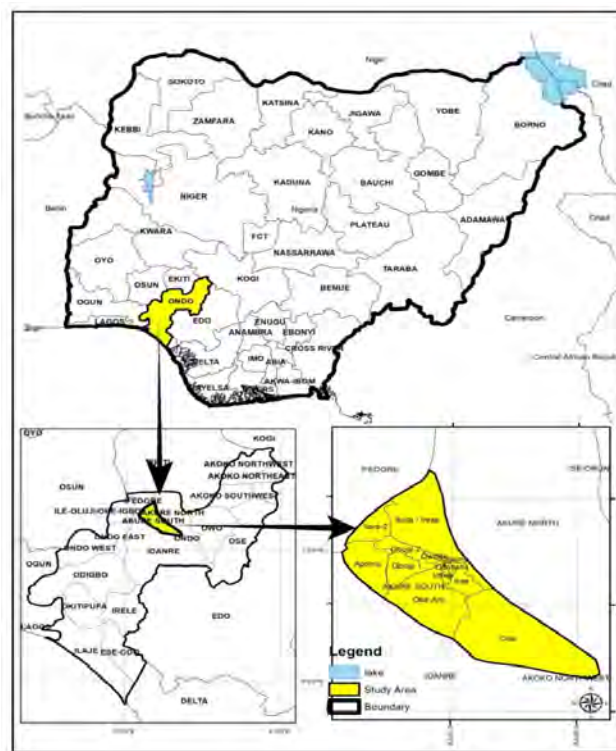


Figure 1: (A) Map of Nigeria Showing Ondo State; (B) Map of Ondo State Showing Akure South LGA; and (C) Map of Akure South LGA Showing the Various Wards.

Source: Google Earth Imagery and Digitized Work (Ileh, 2024).

3.2 | Research Database

This study adopted the survey research method via questionnaire administration, focus groups and interviews, document analysis, content analysis, stakeholders' feedback and assessment. The population of the Akure metropolitan area was estimated at 744,000 in 2023 at 3.77% growth rate specified by the NPC (2006). The target population for the study was the residents of the study area. Family heads were sampled and selected for household interviews and questionnaire administration. The building demography survey conducted gives an estimated 2,142 buildings. Subsequently, the total number of households was estimated at 10,710 according to the submission of the Ondo State Bureau of Statistics (2012) which estimated five households per building in Akure

urban. Three (3) residential quarters were chosen for the study in each of the three zones in Akure Urban using the simple random technique, making nine (9) residential quarters. The total household population in the nine housing quarters was estimated at 10,710 households. From this, a 3% sample size was chosen, which amounted to 321 copies of questionnaire distributed across the study area. This was supplemented with a 5% of 560 professionals (28) in the built environment. The copies of questionnaire were distributed at a determined intervals to household heads in the selected residential neighbourhoods using systematic random sampling with replacement. Data collected were analyzed and discussed using both descriptive and content analyses.

4.0 | Data Analysis and Discussion

4.1 | Examination of the current state of urban development control in Akure

The findings on the current state of urban development control in Akure, as presented in Figure 2, show significant disparities across the three zones of the city. In the core of Akure, development control was notably poor, with 57.8% of respondents attesting to this deficiency and 26.5% of the respondents from the core affirmed that the state of development control was

fair. Conversely, the transition zone of Akure presented a more favourable scenario, with 46.2% of respondents affirmed that development activities were good, 38.5% rated the state of development control as fair, and just over 10% described it as poor. Only the periphery of Akure showed the most positive outcomes, with over 50% of respondents stating that the condition of urban development control was good, and 34.4% asserted that it was very good. These findings imply that the core of Akure, being the traditional heart of the town, lacks adequate planning, which makes development activities in the area difficult to execute. The result affirmed that part of the transition zone of Akure witnessed proper planning and effective development control activities, while the periphery was well-planned with adequate monitoring; hence, development activities within the area runs smoothly, since most of the area has approved layouts that govern and manages development within the area.

Interviews with selected stakeholders in the built environment corroborate these findings. It was also affirmed that development control activities in the core were poor due to the absence of virgin lands in the area. Unlike the transition and peripheral area of the city, where lands are available, it usually comes in the form of

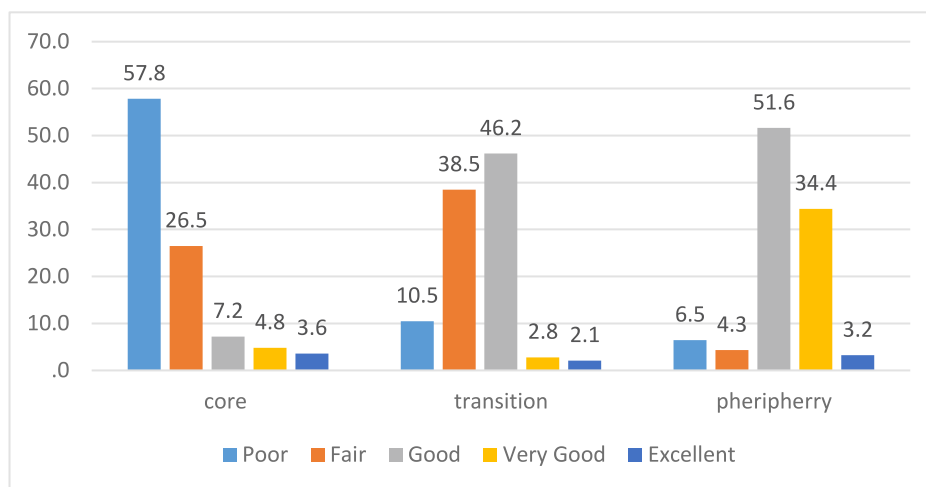


Figure 2: Current State of Urban Development Control in Akure
Source: Authors' Field Survey (2024)

redevelopment in the core. Therefore, property owners usually want to maximise their lands for the utmost benefit due to the high cost of land in the core. The report obtained from a director in the State Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development on the subject of discussion tied the cause of ineffective urban development control to poor funding, shortage of trained personnel to carry out monitoring and enforcement exercises, lack of machinery and tools, obsolete laws and regulations, among others. Some activities of development control officers in selected areas of the city are shown in Figures 3 - 5.



Figure 3: Evacuation of deteriorated structure at Eru-oba **Source:** Authors' Field Survey (2024)



Figure 4: Removal of illegal shop at Idi-Agba **Source:** Authors' Field Survey (2024)

Figure 3 shows the operation of development control at the Eru-oba area of the core, where deteriorated buildings were marked for removal to prevent occurrence of building collapse. Figure 4 displays the operation of the development control officer along Idi-Agba, where illegal additional shops to residential buildings are being removed to

allow adequate airspace into the building, while Figure 5 shows another operation at the Ala community.



Figure 5: Development Control Practice at Ala Community in Akure. **Source:** Authors' Field Survey (2024)

4.2 | *Identification of relevant stakeholders' involvement in Urban Development Control in Akure*

Relevant stakeholders in urban development control identified in the study area and their various engagements are shown in Table 1. Different stakeholders are involved in development control activities, who are professionals in the built environment including town planners, architects, and land surveyors, among others. They play critical roles in facilitating development proposals and ensuring that any form of physical development within the area is controlled safely and coherently to create a sustainable and livable environment. The family heads and community leaders also play critical roles as community representatives while dealing with government and other developmental projects.

Government agencies are major stakeholder involved in the urban development project in Akure. As shown in Table 2. It was affirmed that major government agencies responsible for physical development projects in Akure are the Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development (MPPUD), the Ondo State

Table 1 | Stakeholders' Involvement in Urban Development Control in Akure

S/N	Stakeholders	Involvement in Urban development control
1.	Professionals in the Built Environment	Facilitating development proposal: Professionals in the built environment play crucial roles in ensuring that the development is controlled in a safe and sustainable way that meets the needs of the community.
2.	Household-heads and Community Leaders	Community leaders represent the community in decision making; especially, when dealing with government project.
3.	Government Agencies: ✓ MPPUD ✓ OSDPC ✓ MLSI ✓ FMLH	Set the vision and direction for urban development, create plans and regulations, and as well oversee their implementation. The MPPUD takes the lead role in urban development control, while OSDPC, MLSI, and FMLH play supporting roles in land management, infrastructure development, and setting of national framework for sustainable urban development.
4.	Academic Communities	Educate communities on the importance of the roles of development control and train manpower for effective formulation and execution of decisions and policies.
5.	NGOs & FBOs	Provide financial aids and grants for the implementation of development project.
6.	Multi National Agencies and Development Partners	Play supportive roles, fostering collaboration, knowledge sharing, and capacity building to achieving the vision for a thriving and sustainable urban future.

Source: Authors' Field Survey (2024)

Development and Property Corporation (OSDPC), the Ministry of Lands, Survey and Infrastructure (MLSI) and the Federal Ministry of Lands and Housing (FMLH). These agencies are saddled with the responsibilities of setting vision and direction for urban development, creating physical plans and regulations, and overseeing their implementation. Also, agencies like security personnel are involved to provide adequate security to development control officers during enforcement exercises. However, other stakeholders involved are NGOs, multi-national agencies, development partners, media and the judiciary. Table 2 shows the focus of interest of each stakeholder in urban development control. In addressing this, efforts were made to identify their

specific roles (or groups) and areas of engagements.

The result of findings presented in Figure 6, observed that 34% of sampled respondents believed that effective zoning is a major way in which stakeholders can be involved in development control within the city. Effective zoning is when compatible land uses are put together while incompatible uses are separated from one another. About 30% of the respondents affirmed that the timely issuance of building permits was crucial to getting stakeholders in the built environment involved in development control. The timely issuance of a development permit's approval usually aids building in

Table 2 | Stakeholders' Identification with Specific Roles and Areas of Engagement

S/N	Stakeholder Group	Role(s)	Area of Engagement
1	Government Agencies	Interest Group	Policy formulation, regulatory enforcement.
2	NGOs	Interest Group	Advocacy, community welfare, environmental sustainability.
3	FBOs (Faith-Based Orgs)	Interest Group	Social services, community support.
4	Development Partners	Interest Group	Funding, technical expertise for development projects.
5	Media	Interest Group	Information dissemination, public awareness.
6	Academic Communities	Interest Group	Research, education, and innovation in urban planning
7	Judiciary	Beneficiary	Legal oversight & compliance functions, dispute resolution and review of obsolete regulations.
8	Household Heads	Impacted/Interest Party	Directly affected by urban policies and infrastructure development.
9	Professionals in the Built Environment	Interest Group	Design, construction, supervision and management of urban infrastructure.

Source: Authors' Field Survey (2024)

conformity with the approved planning scheme. Enforcement of building codes within the study area was affirmed by 23% as a good strategy, while 13% affirmed that environmental sustainability is a good strategy of involvement in development control in Akure. This implies that despite the current states of development control in the city, stakeholders were involved in numerous developmental projects within the city to achieve a resilient and sustainable environment. In the course of interaction with the Director of Monitoring and Enforcement, Ondo State Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development on the involvement of stakeholders in development control; his submission is presented here using Content Analysis:

“We usually identify stakeholders based on developmental projects and their engagement in development control. Stakeholders such as developers, community heads (where the

project is being carried out), media, development partners and other professionals in the built environment; especially, the town planners, architects, surveyors, engineers, and consultants are constantly involved in several projects. We usually engage them through three major means after several consultations, which are: public meetings, online surveys, and workshops. But the most effective method is through public meetings. Our engagement with stakeholders has always brought resolution to conflicts like boundary encroachment, and project location. This aspect of stakeholders engagement has normally been used to educate people on the need to build according to laid down regulations of development through which fairness, justice and equity are achieved for the sustainable growth of the cities” (ODMPPUD).

These submissions affirmed that different categories of stakeholders were involved in development control in the built environment. It also affirmed that developers and community

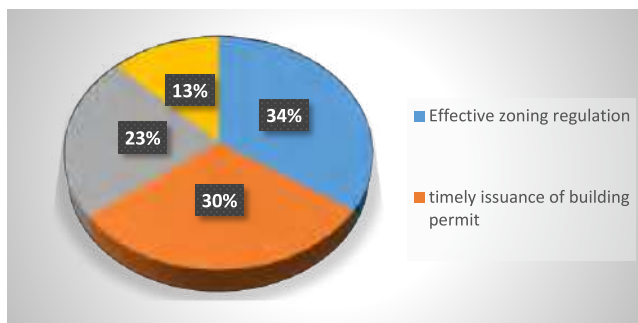


Figure 6 | Stakeholders' Involvement in Urban Development Control in the Study Area
Source: Authors' Field Survey (2024)



Figure 7 | Stakeholders' meeting with Aro of Oke-Aro. **Source:** Authors' Field Survey (2023)



Figure 8 | Stakeholders' meeting with Deji of Akure. **Source:** Authors' Field Survey (2023)

heads of respective neighbourhoods where projects are located were also involved in development control. During this interaction, it was emphasized that the major means of involving the stakeholders was through public meetings, which principally helped to resolve numerous land-related conflicts and disputes.

Figures 7, 8, 9, and 10 illustrate some of the



Figure 9 | Town-Hall meeting with community leaders. **Source:** Authors' Field Survey (2023)



Figure 10 | Stakeholders' Town-Hall meeting in Akure **Source:** Authors' Field Survey (2023)

previous stakeholders' engagements with the ministry officials towards effective urban development control in the study area. Figure 7 illustrates the engagement of Directors of the Ministry of Physical Planning and the state chapter of the Nigeria Institute of Town Planners (NITP) officials in a stakeholders' meeting with the High Chief Aro of the Oke-Aro community and his chiefs. The focus is on the need for the redevelopment of Akure's inner city to ensure that the issues of land disputes among residents of the community are tackled through the adoption of some planning techniques and, as well, to advise them on adherence to planning standard and regulations within their jurisdictions. Figure 8 shows the engagement of the former Ondo State NITP Chairman and some staff of the State Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development in a stakeholders' meeting with the paramount ruler, the Deji of Akure on the Akure master plan review and the need to curb haphazard

development in the city center; especially, around the King's market. Figures 9 and 10 show town hall meetings by the members of staff of the Ondo State MPPUD and some community leaders to deliberate on boundary issues, development control, and the importance of planning schemes preparation for Akure urban development.

5. | Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Findings in the study have shown that the present state of development control activities in the Akure city core is poor, but a little bit fair and good in the transition and peripheral areas respectively. This attested to the fact that some of the peripheral areas have layouts guiding the development whereas there are no functional layouts at the core. The study, therefore, concludes that stakeholders' engagement is a key factor in development control, which shows the need to plan with the people and not only plan for them because planning with them results in active and effective manifestation of planning results. Thus, the study recommends the following measures to improve the current state of development control activities in Akure City:

1. The government and related ministries should constantly engage the public to seek their opinion, and support in any development project to ensure hitch-free development activities.
2. Public enlightenment on the need for development control activities within the study area through media such as weekly reports, monthly reports, and news reports, among others, should be adopted by the government and all other related personnel

to sensitize people on the need to adopt the use of development control activities within their area for a sustainable environment good for living.

3. Provision of effective and adequate planning tools to regulate development activities within the study area such as master plan, land use plan, layout, and inspection vehicle, among others to facilitate effective monitoring and adequate regulation of development activities.
4. Identifying the roles of each stakeholder in the built environment with distinct specifications to avoid conflict of interest.
5. Increased number of qualified personnel to enhance effective monitoring and enforcement at the grassroots. As specified in the Decree 88 of 1992 Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law, there should be a separate department named 'Development Control' in each Local Government Area, which must be headed by a registered town planner, as well as the secretary, to ensure the effectiveness of development control.
6. Improved logistic allocation to the ministry to enhance effective development control exercise.
7. Improved security measures should be attached to the development control section to safeguard lives and properties during enforcement operations.

Acknowledgments

All authors and references cited in the write-up are well acknowledged. The efforts of our research assistants in the collection of research data used for the study are also appreciated.

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