

## The Role of Private Developers in Physical Development of Greater Port Harcourt City

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**Abstract:** Private Developers initiates layouts or schemes for undeveloped land for orderly development of cities. They are the biggest residential housing providers in the cities (particularly at the peripheries of the cities) of Nigeria. These developers account for 55 – 70% of housing stock in the country. This study aimed at undertaking an examination of private developers' development activities at the periphery of the Greater Port Harcourt City. The target population of 17,132 was drawn from household of sampled peripheral communities. A mixed research method was adopted for the study. A simple random sampling technique was used to select respondents. A pilot survey was carried out to check and determine the reliability of the questionnaire before administering to the respondents. A total of 390 copies of questionnaires were administered. Data collected from primary sources included; personal observation and oral interviews. The key informant interview (Director Development Control, Greater Port Harcourt City Development Authority) was also employed. Secondary sources of date collected included the maps, books, journals, articles, sitelite images and other published and unpublished materials relating to this study. Univariate statistics was used to analyse data. The findings of the research showed that the private developers' development activities at the periphery of GPHC brought about orderly and organised development of neighbourhoods, easy access to land and increase in the value of land.

### Introduction

Private developer refers to an individual, consortium, registered society, registered trust, cooperative housing society or association, body of individual corporate or incorporate agreeing to own or assemble or owning by purchase or otherwise land for development (Housing and Urban Planning Department of Uttar Pradesh, 2018). It is also referred to as an entity or person that is legally and financially responsible for the planning, physical development, and maintenance of land and property (Public Art Ordinance of the City of Richmond California, 2017).

According to Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation (2012) private land developers are property developers within the private sector. They acquire property or land, construct or reconstruct them and sell to individuals or corporate organisations. Sometimes these private developers propose or initiate schemes or layouts for undeveloped land in order to develop an orderly and organised estate, which in turn increases the land value. Most times they sub-divide land (into plots) and sell to individuals and organisations. At other times they develop the land, rent or lease or sell the property out rightly to interested persons or organisations.

Ogu & Ogbuozobe (2001) noted that private developers are the biggest residential housing providers in the cities (particularly at the peripheries of the cities) of Nigeria. These developers account for 55 – 70% of housing stock in the country. They develop or build an average of 1- 5 houses with finance from their personal savings.

Following independence in 1960, private developers' played active role in acquiring land for development as urban areas went through a strong phase of transition and growth in Nigeria. The spatial structures of cities were modified to absorb new inhabitants, functions and activities (Fourchard, 2003). The cities hosted structures used for administrative functions and government services, as well as institutions such as hospitals and educational facilities. Commercial activities of both small and big enterprises, industrial activities of all sorts started emerging in the cities. The commercial and other economic activities that went on in the cities attracted population from the rural to urban areas. Due to the influx of people to the urban area large amounts of lands were required for accommodating new inhabitants. The private land developers seized the opportunity to acquire land and developed properties (both residential and commercial) for rent and lease mainly at the edges of the cities (Onu and Onu, 2012).

Greater Port Harcourt City (GPHC) was established by Rivers State Law No 2 of 2009. The area incorporates the entire Port Harcourt City Local Government Area and portions of Obio/Akpor, Okirika and Ogu-Bolo. Ikwerre, Etche, Oyiegbo and Eleme Local Government areas. It was created to cater to the growing population of Port Harcourt Municipality, the increased demand for housing, modern urban amenities, medical and educational facilities, as well as services. Greater Port Harcourt City was also intended to deal with the

existing dimension of sprawl and changing the dynamics of land development (The Greater Port Harcourt Project, 2012).

### The Study Area

Greater Port Harcourt City is located between Latitudes 4° 45' North, 4° 55' North and Longitudes 6° 55' East and 7° 05' East in Rivers State (see Fig 1.1). It had an estimated population of 3,171,076 people as at 2021 (United Nations, 2021) and it covers an area of approximately 1,900 km<sup>2</sup> (734 mi<sup>2</sup>) (The Tide, 2012). The area lies at the mouth of Bonny River (a tributary of the River Niger).

### Climate

The climate of the area is characterized by two seasons; the rainy and the dry seasons. The rainy season extends from March to November. Rainfall reaches a peak in July, after which there is a short dry period in late August. Heavy rainfall usually resumes in September and tapers off during October and November. The rainy season winds (the South-west Monsoon) blow from the Atlantic Ocean, bringing in much of the rainfall. During the dry season (from November to February) a desert wind from the north known as the Harmattan prevails. It is characterised by thick haze and reduced visibility (World Meteorological Organisation, 2016).

The relative humidity is high throughout the year with a minimum of about 80 per cent and a maximum of 90 per cent. The relative humidity decreases during the course of the dry season and fluctuates more irregularly during the rainy season. The average maximum temperatures range from 29°C during the rainy season to 32°C during the drier months. Minimum temperatures reach about 20°C during the moderate mild periods (World Meteorological Organisation, 2016).

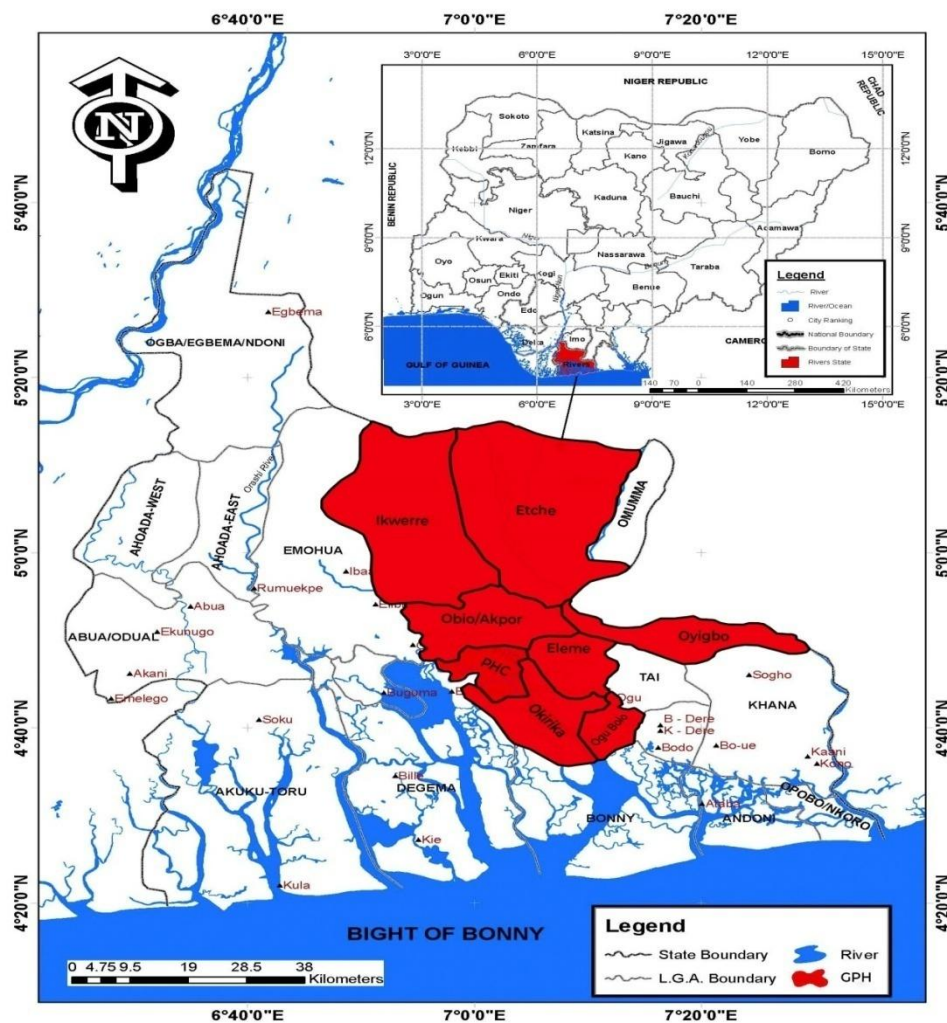


Fig. 1.1: Map of Rivers State Showing the Study Area

Source: Department of Urban and Regional Planning GIS, (2023).

### History

Port Harcourt is the capital of Rivers State in the south-south with a population of 3,171,076 and the fifth most populous city in Nigeria (The Tide, 2012). The city was founded in 1912 and was named after Lewis Vernon Harcourt (then British Secretary of State for the Colonies) in 1913 when, Sir Fredrick Lugard (then British Governor General of the Northern and Southern Protectorates of Nigeria) wrote to Harcourt to name the new port after his name which he obliged (Okafor, 1973; Hudgens, & Trillo, 2003). The area before 1912 was farmland for the Rebisi people of Ikwerre ethnic group. The port was created to export coal from Enugu located 243 kilometres north of Port Harcourt (Williams, 2008).

### Economy

The economy of Port Harcourt became based on petroleum when the first shipment of Nigeria crude oil was exported through the city in 1958. Port Harcourt is the chief oil-refining city in Nigeria and has two main oil refineries located at Eleme. Both refineries process around 210,000 barrels of crude oil a day, both operated by the Port Harcourt Refining Company (Ogbuigwe, 2018). Rivers State is one of the wealthiest states in Nigeria in terms of gross domestic product and foreign exchange revenue from the oil industry, crude oil being its principal export earner, (Ogbuigwe, 2018). Today, oil companies like Shell, Agip, and Chevron etc. have their head offices in Port Harcourt. The Rivers State Government House, Rivers State University and some institutions are located in the city. They include; the University of Port Harcourt, Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, and Rivers State College of Health Science, and Technology and the just completed Port Harcourt Law School campus.

### The Role of Private Developers' in Land Development in the Study Area

The study found that private developers acquired massive land (some in conjunction with the community leaders) in the study area.

They prepare layout plan (neighbourhood plan). The land is sub-divided into different landuses (residential, commercial, agricultural and industrial).

They secure approval of the layout plan from the GPHCDA.

The sub-divided land is sold to individuals and firms that develops' their plots according to the guideline and regulations provided by the private land developers.

Private developers' assist those that purchase land to secure title deeds.

They encourage buyers to make payments in instalments.

They also, make rules and regulations that govern the estates (in terms of security and infrastructure provision).

They protect the land from aggressors from the community.

### Conclusion

This study has concluded that private developers' and development activities exist in the study area. It is an activity practiced mainly by Private Land Developers (Estate Developers) mainly male with high education, indigenes and high income earners.

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