

Research article

PROPERTY CONVERSION, ITS IMPACT ON RESIDENTIAL AREAS OF METROPOLITAN LAGOS

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ABSTRACT

In most urban centres like Lagos, conversion of Residential structures for pressing commercial needs 'seems to have become the norm. Residential properties always get built because of the sustained demand which guarantees good return. Once trends begin to suggest that there are higher returns to gain from commercial property they begin to convert existing buildings especially when it is difficult to get suitably located land and the cost of building is high. Given the above scenario it becomes relatively cheaper to convert existing residential structures to other uses, more so since existing residential areas have the added advantage of being in the city center with access to existing services such as electricity, water supply, telephone and transportation. Such locations also offer advantages of proximity to require labour and markets. The market forces when aggressively pursued as a major determinant in property development in the urban centres as a result of either bad planning or weak planning management tend to obviate the 'public good' that is inherent in good planning. Worse still is a situation where such a force is allowed to invade the "Planned Residential Areas (PRA) which are both symbol and model for urban life and development. The paper tries to turn away from the theoretical background and assumptions, associated with market enforces in real estate to highlight the consequences associated with conversion. It is Pertinent to mention that policy decisions at any level are not to be seen as immutable for flexibility is the keynote of successful property management (Ratcliffe,1978). **Copyright © WJESD, all rights reserved.**

Keywords: Property, Conversion, Residential Areas, Lagos

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The rate of abandoned and converted commercial property development that adorn the cities call to question the reliability of the development appraisal that supports the commencement of such projects (Alabi, 2011).

Conversion of residential structure to other uses alters the urban scene dramatically not only physically but also socially and economically. The changes resulting there from end to create both positive and negative impacts. Apart from raising the property value, the effects include the juxtaposition of incompatible land uses heavy traffic congestion (pedestrian and vehicular environmental and increased burden on social and infrastructural services. According to Spedding, (1998), the function of building maintenance/conversion is to keep the facilities and the building in optimum conditions so that the intended functions are performed satisfactorily. This development appraisal techniques generally employed in practice had been criticized on the basis of the simplifying assumptions (Darlow, 1990)

This paper examines the impact of conversion in selected areas of Lagos metropolis which was originally planned as residential areas. These are: Awolowo Road, Ikoyi, Adeniyi Jones avenue, Ikeja and Adeniran Ogunsanya Street, in Surulere district.

2.0 Building and Land US conversion — A Theoretical Background

Conversion could be defined as upgrading a building or changing its original use or form. The process of conversion could either be legal or illegal depending on the planning and provisions setting such developments up. Conversion could also be refers to the modification of the existing structures .It involves carrying out improvement work on existing building and conversion of existing building if it is estimated that the capitalized value of the additional returns will exceed the cost of alterations. Okunola *et al* (2012).

Conversion is also referred to the concept of redevelopment which involves demolishing or pulling down existing structure on a land and rebuilding of structure to greater density. It may involve change of use in the process. Okunola *et al* (2012).

Conversion is generally a means by which an area is upgraded to serve a more useful use from its original use through addition and upgrading of the structure. The change may lead to an increase in the prices of the building and aesthetic values of the property. The process of conversion may he, the renovation of the interior partitions to aid the proposed used, and a facelift face light of the facade.

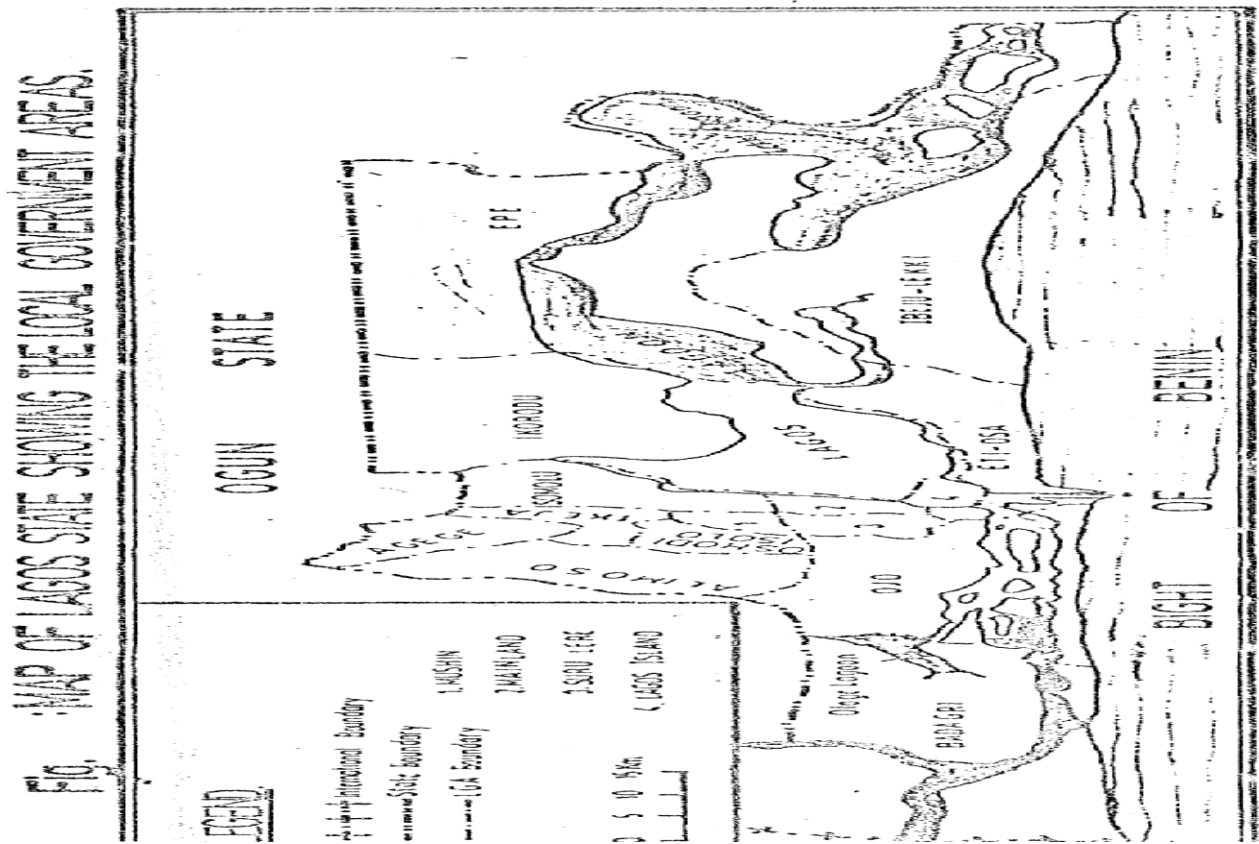
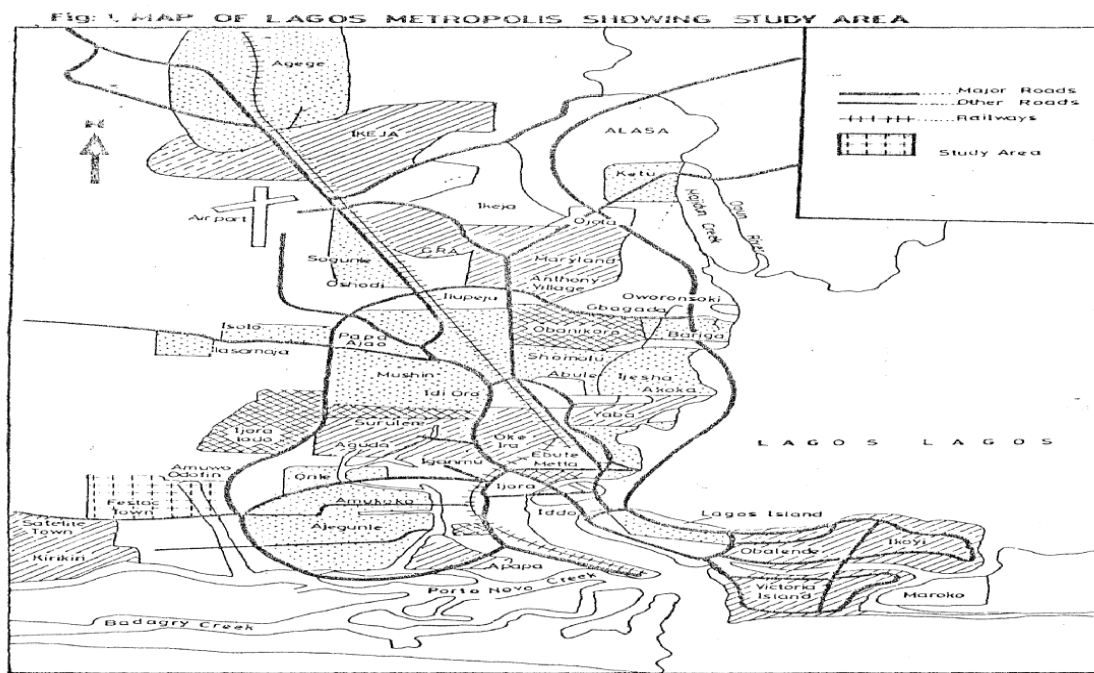


Fig. 1. LAGOS STATE SURVEY FIELD WORK.



The major victim of conversion in a lot of cases is the residential area since office or other commercial activities especially in C.B.D. and its outlying areas usually attract higher revenue. A residential area in planning generally refers to an area strictly designated for dwelling unit contrasted with business or industrial activities. In a residential area, emphasis is laid on the comfort of the residents. The requirements are often a standard layout monitored by local planning authority, with a separation from main flow of traffic, diversity in development in terms of building forms, sea and type. Other criteria are adequate parking space; provision of open space distinct separation of pedestrian traffic from vehicular traffic. Of equal importance is the provision of adequate services such as electricity and water supply, telephone and waste disposal services.

The 1991 census figure puts Lagos population at 5.69m. Lagos was the effective capital of Nigeria from colonial times until December 12, 1991, when the then Head of State Gen. Ibrahim Babangida commenced actual movement to Abuja. The metropolitan Lagos covers an area of about 8.029km with the land and the waterways accounting for about 17%. For decades the city has witnessed large in flocks of immigrants who come from all parts of the country and other parts of the world, in search of jobs and business opportunities. Many have the city their home. Historically, business development started in Isale Eko on the Lagos Island in a place which could be described as central Lagos.

The business district has expanded over the years to cover such areas as Marina, Adeniji Adele, Martins, and Baloguns Streets across the Lagoon into such other areas as Iddo, Oyingbo, Sahoi-Yaba Oshodi Mushin, Ikeja, and Agage. Office employment has grown from colonial times through the time of independence till today as the economy grows new office functions have multiplied in areas like corporate headquarters, consultancy services, advertising, banking and insurance, professional, organizational etc. The new functions created a demand for offices in areas previously occupied by other uses particularly residential.

Aside from the pressure for new office spaces, congestion was being created by the new vehicular and pedestrian traffic generated by the increase. A large segment of the working class are by now car owners due in part to the oil boom and the deregulation of the Naira in the mid 1980's. With the increase of workers in the service sector and the importation of used cars by the new class and the temptation to use vehicles on inadequate and congested roads, traffic problem has multiplied.

Economic growth creates demand for commercial accommodation and hence pressure in the city core to accommodate new user inadvertently, this; occurs with increasing to displace residential Units. As a result, areas close to the central business district and major nodes in the city's outlying districts began to witness the invasion of commercial activities to the extent that planned residential areas like Ikeja and Surulere became the most affected.

3.0 THE STUDY AREAS

The selected locations are Awolowo Road Ikoyi, Adeniran Ogunsanya Street in Surulere, Allen and Adeniyi Jones Avenues Ikeja.

The road from the foot of Onikan round about runs through South West Ikoyi, passing through Falomo area to link the Ikoyi G.R.A. Awolowo Road is also the major link between Ikoyi, G.R.A., and the Lagos Central business district comprising Broad, Marina, and Martins Streets.

Adeniran Ogunsanya Street is located in the Surulere district area of metropolitan Lagos. It is off Alhaji Masha; street that starts from National Stadium along Western Avenue. It is embraced by Bode Thomas Street at its other end. It is a planned Residential Area (The result of the slum clearance of Lagos Island in the early 1960's) with prototype housing units of Surulere.

Allen Avenue, Ikeja is located in Ikeja District and is bordered by the intersection of Aromore/Awolowo way round about and Toyin Street and Opebi Road on the other side. It was schemed for residential development with a freedom of building designs.

Adeniyi Jones Avenue is also located in Ikeja district, It is within the vicinity of Allen Avenue and Ikeja G.R.A. Oh Akran Road, a predominant industrial road in Ikeja is the major arm of the district and tails off at Acme industrial road in Ogba. Adeniyi Jones Avenue was also planned as a residential areas with two Prototype Housing Units. It is otherwise surrounded by major Industrial concerns.

4.0 Site Characteristics

Adeniran Ogunsanya

Nwankwo, (1995) stated that the extent of authority the manager has will determine his success on large residential or industrial areas. However, Adeniran Ogunsanya Street and its immediate environs were planned for a residential activities between 1960 — 1963 by the then Lagos Executive Development Board. (LEDB). Houses were built by the board on two-prototypes, the Federal Housing Authority, 5 bed-room, one-story house which had a living and

dining rooms with adjoining kitchen and guest from on the ground floor and covered garage; and the 4 bedroom on the upper floor. The second prototype is the 4 bungalow consisting of living room, 3 bedrooms, kitchen and toilet found mostly on the secondary roads that feed Adeniran Ogunsanya Street. A shopping centre is located at the end of Adeniran Ogunsanya Street, where it joints Bode Thomas. This shopping centre is located at the end of Adeniran Ogdnsanya Street, where it joined Bode Thomas. This shopping complex is tile only market in Surulere apart from Gbaja market which is about 11/12km away on Akerele street. The initial reaction of the residents to the absence of shops nearby for consumer goods first led to the conversion of garages in the houses to shops to remedy tile situation. The planning boards reaction to the development led to the establishment of corner shops the junction of Alhaji Masha Street with Adeniran Ogunsanya and another at Adelabu Street.

The additional centres were not enough. The nearness of this thriving middle class neighbourhood to Apapa, Wharf, Central Lagos, and being on tile route to these commercial centres gave it away for commercial conversion that was to follow. Lagos CBD was at the same time fast becoming inaccessible due to heavy traffic congestion.

Inadequate office and commercial facilities, high rent, and where vacancies exist, high rent and parking problems became confronting the new entrepreneurs. The boom period of the 1980's accelerated car ownership, and a new class of worker; (professionals, insurance, brokers, new generation banks who needs not be in Lagos island to practise their trade) emerged. This new Lagos Surulere, separated from the Island by the Lagoon and some industries in Iganmu with its strong labour force and ready consumer market attracted new office accommodation seeker. In addition to other advantages in Surulere, social and infrastructural facilities were also readily available.

Adeniran Ogunsanya Street the major connector between Surulere through Bode Thomas and Eric Moore Streets to Lagos Island and Apapa fell to market forces. The garages and that were once home to consumer household goods gave way to other items such as appliances, stationeries and small offices. In no time the garages became insufficient and whole houses began to give way to new uses. Original tenants realizing that they can make more money readily let out part or all of their houses to tenants for profit. In some cases, there were outright purchases of homes and the new tenants cashing in on them, helplessness of the planning authority began actual transformation of the houses by changing the façade patterns. In some cases additional rooms (offices) were added; resulting in contravention of planning set hack standards. The various contravention, have resulted in properties occupying a larger building coverage.

Buildings get more clustered giving in less light and air and more no use. Today very few residential houses with the initial design stands, on Adeniran Ogunsanya Street. The increase activities have resulted in more population than planned for. The social and infrastructures activities, the new customers and clients alike has brought, has become a burden. A bus route not planned for in the scheme has opened up for customers along this planned and once quiet residential street. Noise is generated not only by the new traffic upsurge but also by generators installed to take care of the short fall in the power provided by NEPA with the accompanying smoke.

The 1986 deregulation of the economy by the federal government brought two problems. One demand for new office spaces and the lifting of the ban on imported vehicles with used cars becoming a large imported item. Adeniran Ogunsanya street became a home to these new offices with the used cared clientele (new tenants and customers alike who add more traffic congestion, noise and smoke, pollution. Parking became a problem, pedestrians also suffered. The result is a total breakdown of planning norms. Social and infrastructural services with chaotic services as a result of the development includes water, waste-removal, telephone. What exists now has already overtaken [he initial budgeted design.

Adeniyi Jones, Avenue

Adeniyi Jones Avenue a major planncl residential street, in Ikeja District, laid out as a two way street recently has to how to a new demand having it designated a one way street, obviously with whatever inconvenience to the leftover residential houses. After SO much conversions its adjacent street are not spared the inconvenience, being a major connector road. In the district, when it was planned by old Western Region as a residential component of the Ikeja industrial district with a particular housing schemes (3 bedroom bungalows and 5 bedroom including guest room, detached one storey houses little did the planner realize that this bedroom component of the dominant industrial land use will give way to mixed usage.

Adeniyi Jones Avenue has transformed to a commercial street within an industrial district for a number of factors. One of which is its location between two industrial areas (Oba Akran Avenue and Acme Road Industrial area). The need for commercial component to service the industries in areas like banking, insurance, professional consultancies and restaurants. Equally important is the need for a school or day-care centres for working parents in the distinct. Another important factor which makes the conversion imminent is the commercial revival of the area in general (Opebi road, Awolowo way, Toyin Street, Allen Avenue, Aromire Avenue).

The creation of Lagos State in 1967 with Ikeja as the capital created a need for commercial activities particularly in areas not too far from Alausa — the State Secretariat within the site's vicinity. The expansion of business from Lagos Island as earlier mentioned is another compelling factor. The conversions here have taken on a specialized form — mainly offices because retail activities are already highly developed on the other major roads earlier identified. The other areas started off without major restrictions in building types particularly Awolowo way and Allen avenue. The new offices battle for recognition in their design with residential areas that still retain their original features. Conversion of houses also meant a fall-out from planning standard such as set-backs, loss of identify for remaining residential houses and invasion of privacy. The demand for office space has led to high rent which culminates in high living standards forcing some original tenants out, investigations revealed.

The ratio of commercial to residential structures on Adeniyi Jone is 40:60 (based an physical count) and could then be concluded that there is an intrusion of privacy; and an invasion of noise created by the new use. Additional noise is generated during conversions by concrete mixers and generators serving the offices that replaced over-taxed power supply as observed. in a bid to create more rooms in the converted properties, original setbacks (front, back and sides) were reduced building heights were increased drafting and suffocating the original houses. In building close to one another, light and good ventilation is hindered.

The traffic on the Avenue was deigned as an access road to feed minor roads in the layout and at the same time to link the major industrial areas. It is also a connector with Aromire Street (an intermediate access road) to Obafemi Awolowo Way linking the community with secretariat, Oregun and other Commercial centres of Ikeja. With the graduate conversion of residential buildings to offices, the few of traffic has become heavier and the direction of flow of traffic became different. Traffic from Ogba, Isheri, Ojodu and Omole passes through Adeniyi Jones Avenue to get to Ikeja. Peak hour traffic became terrible and the planning solution by Ikeja Local Government was to make the Avenue a one-way street which though has reduced traffic flow drastically but has meant some inconvenience to the residents (see*) the rather general set-back planned in. this scheme has almost creased where frontages have all been used up and fenced. Visitors' cars are forced to park on whatever little space is left for pedestrian movement who always have to run for their lives. Buses plying the road do not have designated bus-stops thus further compounding pedestrian movements.

Allen Avenue

The history of this avenue though recent in origin is very scanty. The entire area like the avenue itself is zoned residential, but it is now largely a commercial street. It was characterized by open plots that was sold to individuals by the government for residential development with a freedom of design. The only zoned area for commercial activity is the existing Ade market at the junction of Allen Avenue and Obafemi Awolowo Way round-about.

Commercial activity in the area actually commenced from its inception with the development of small shops and stores. The freedom of design approach and the pressing external influence for commerce in the area created problems particularly with regards to set-backs in the layouts. The high level of commercial activities short-up property values to the extent that it become unprofitable to build residential houses.

As shopping malls and offices flourished the few houses that were initially built were either sold outright or rented out as offices. As business boomed and expanded the study revealed, traffic became chaotic and one is then left to wonder whether any basic planning law was applied during the construction of most of the buildings. It is observed that during days and nights the avenue is filled with an array of business activities ranging from banks to shops and eating-places. The activities are numerous, the population so dense and planning seeming elusive. One further observed only a percentage of the building structures in the survey are houses in their original forms. The rest have been converted or designed originally as commercial structures.

The volume of traffic has so far exceeded what it was designing to carry being a local distributor, linking districts. It has created bottleneck at the junction of Allen Avenue and Obafemi Awolowo Way. Parking facilities and haphazard building setbacks on Allen Avenue leaves no room for ease of pedestrian movement. The avenue, now a major bus route has no designated bus stops.

Awolowo Road

There is hardly a structure on this important avenue in the affluent section of Lagos Island (Ikoyi) that will remind one that it was planned as a residential linkage between the designated official residence of the colonial administration and their support staff on the one hand and the civic buildings at Obalende, Race Course and Marina. Awolowo road become an extension to Ikoyi in the 1960's and its characters was strictly residential.

Commercial activity began in the lick-up garages provided in the four bedroom duplexes, and operated on a low profile but grew rapidly as the CBD earlier identified became saturated with commercial life and the demand for

commercial space spread beyond bounds. Awolowo road because of available market (consumers and workers alike) became the prime target for the bur coming commercial vibrancy.

It is very difficult today to trace the original houses, because virtually every property has been taken over by commercial concerns. The road is now a home to embassies, banks, organizational head quarters and other affluent corporate tenants. Its new look or affluence has not been spared a bit by the same negative impacts that has bedeviled other areas that have undergone such transformations.

5.0 DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

A major public tool, 'planning' designed to guide development control has been violated as evidenced in the case studies presented. The question that comes to mind in the case studies is, what is responsible for the scenarios presented? The history of some of the streets presented as case studies came about as a direct result of a need to answer some specific planning problems. The Defunct Lagos Executive Development Board (LEDB) of which the present Lagos State Property and Development Corporation (L.S.D.P.C.) is an offshoot, was established in 1928 after the bubonic plague of the 1920s, to tackle specific problems such as housing. The board was also to address itself to swamp and slum clearance; settlement of people displaced by slum clearance; set and approve building plans. They are also to plan new residential and industrial sites and sell out plots to individuals.

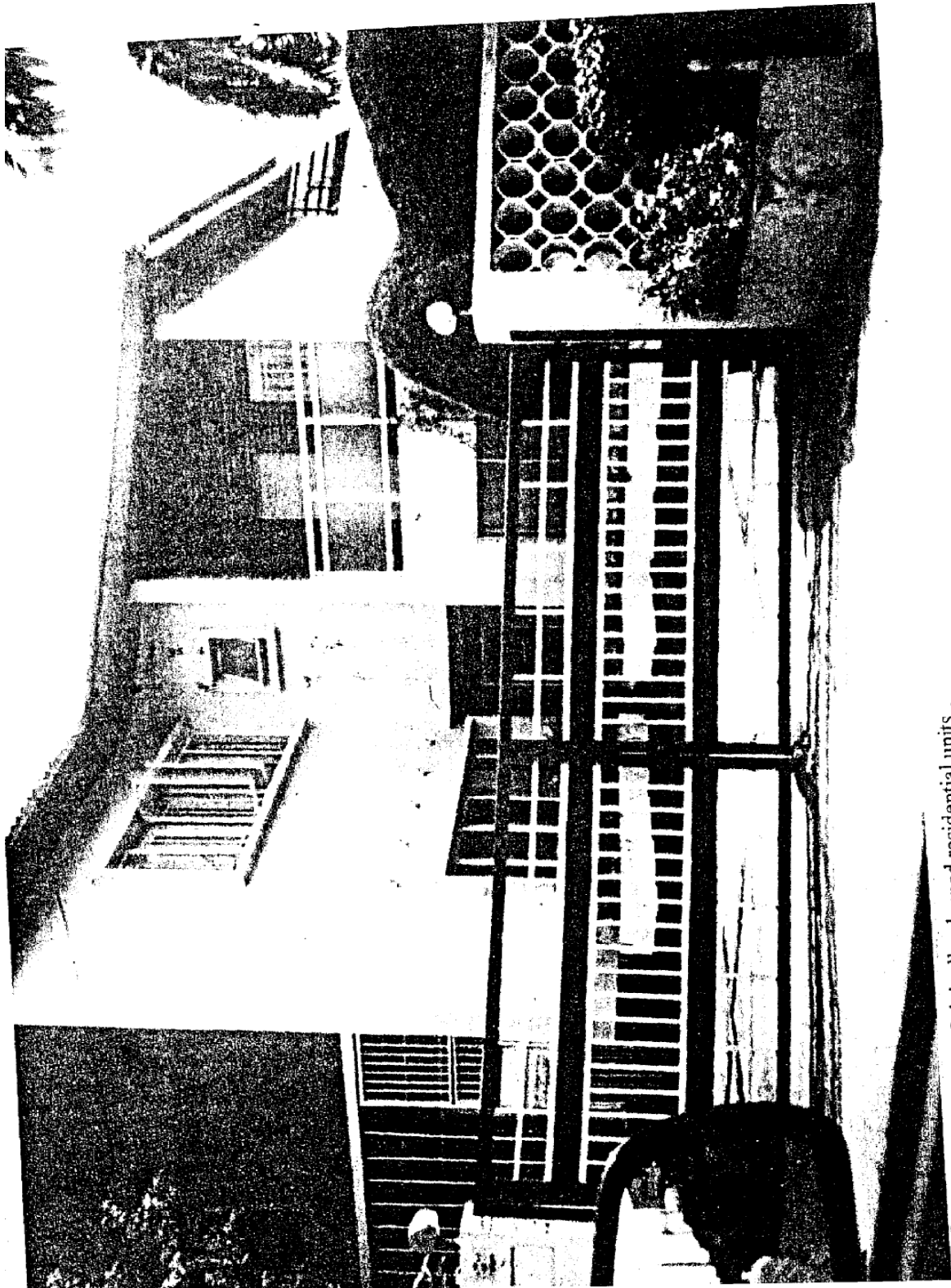
The board was in large part responsible for Awolowo road, and LEDB Housing in Surulere of which Adeniran Ogunsanya Street, is a major focus is the apogee of the board's success in the provision of housing. On its part, Adeniyi Jones Avenue is to serve the needs of the new industrial estate, in Ikeja created by the old Western Regional Government. The areas had planning and it was indeed, good planning. If indeed it was good planning, the management and planning control mechanisms now are either non-existent or weak. Investigations revealed that planning control mechanisms is in place through the board that created it and various government planning institutions in the state. If such bodies exist their operations could at best be judged a failure as evidenced by the result of the case studies presented.

How does good planning management and control explain why undilapidated structures in stable neighbourhoods with good infrastructure fall apart within a few decades of their development? Good planning programme often teaches that depressed, abandoned or totally neglected areas are pivots for economic and social growth. Good planning does not encourage tearing apart of neighbourhoods, it is always at best, when such neighbourhoods are socially stable but structurally unsound, to upgrade their structures.

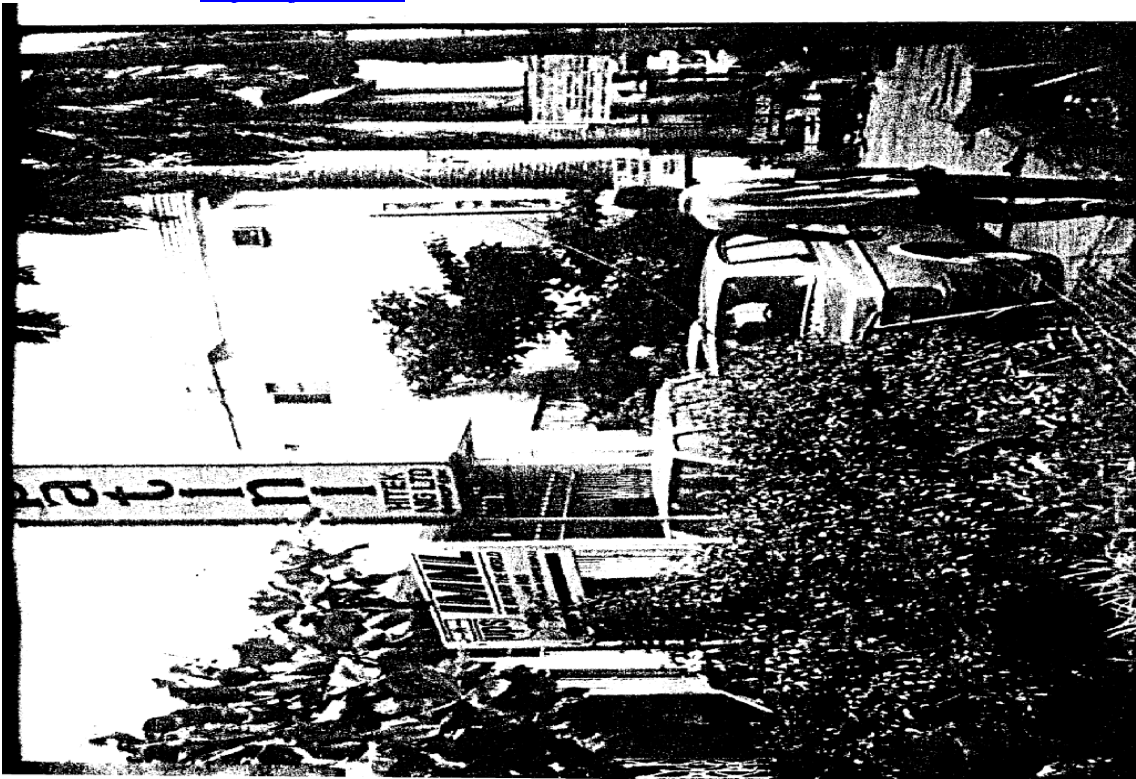
Economy growth as some may claim, in the conversion exercise, invades stable, socially, structurally sound neighbourhoods cannot be real growth. The capital that is being injected into these neighbourhoods should have been taken elsewhere where opportunity will exist to actually renew, redevelop or rehabilitate a depressed area. This will have the added advantage of an improved urban life job creation in the construction industry and a real growth in the overall economy and not just a sub-sector will be witnessed. The kind of problems that led to the creation of LEDB could also spur the creation of similar neighbourhoods that will answer the needs that the current crisis posed.

The absence of community and preservation groups and other Sympathetic urban movements in advocacy planning could have prevented the onslaught by the new tenants. An argument can arise that market forces determine real estate property, but with proper planning laws, management and control coupled with strong community and advocacy planning, such market forces 'energy' could be diverted elsewhere. Market forces should not be the only criteria that determine the uses to which real estate property are put. 1-historical preservation, neighbourhood preservation and identify are equally important. There are planning laws guiding alternations and improvements on property, such laws should strictly be enforced.

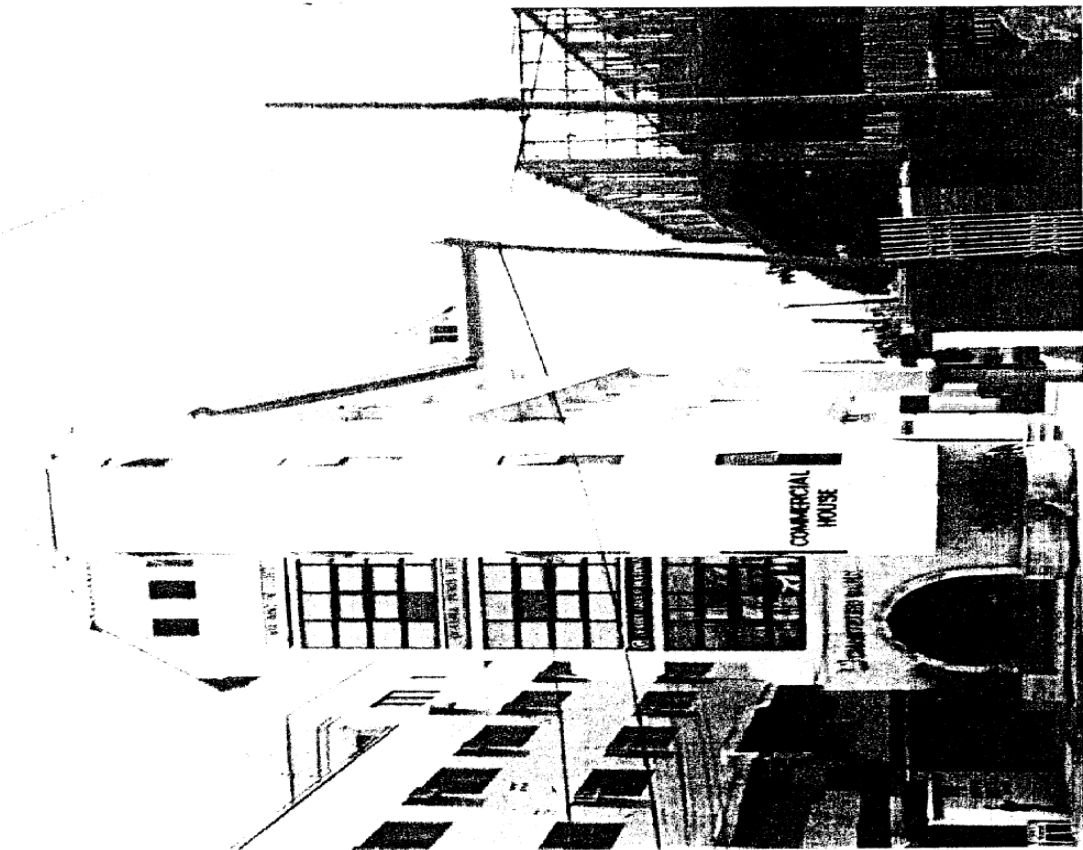
The establishment of regional planning boards for the metropolitan arrears with the active collaboration of Local Planning Agencies and private interest group should be formed to meet regularly to appraise the planning problems and find ways to accommodate all competing land uses for the benefit of the economy and the citizens as well. The base factor shouldn't be economy along. Zoning regulations should from time to time be reviewed to reflect the dynamics in the real estate market and the market economy.



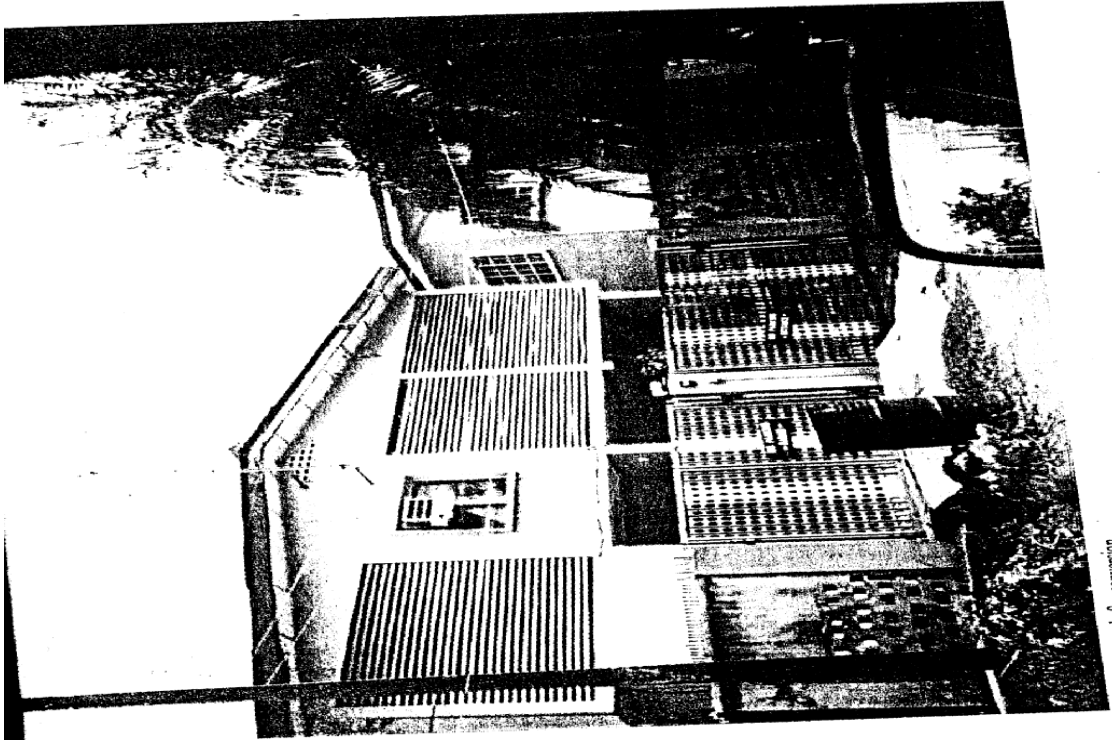
ADENIRAN Ogunsanya – Originally planned residential units



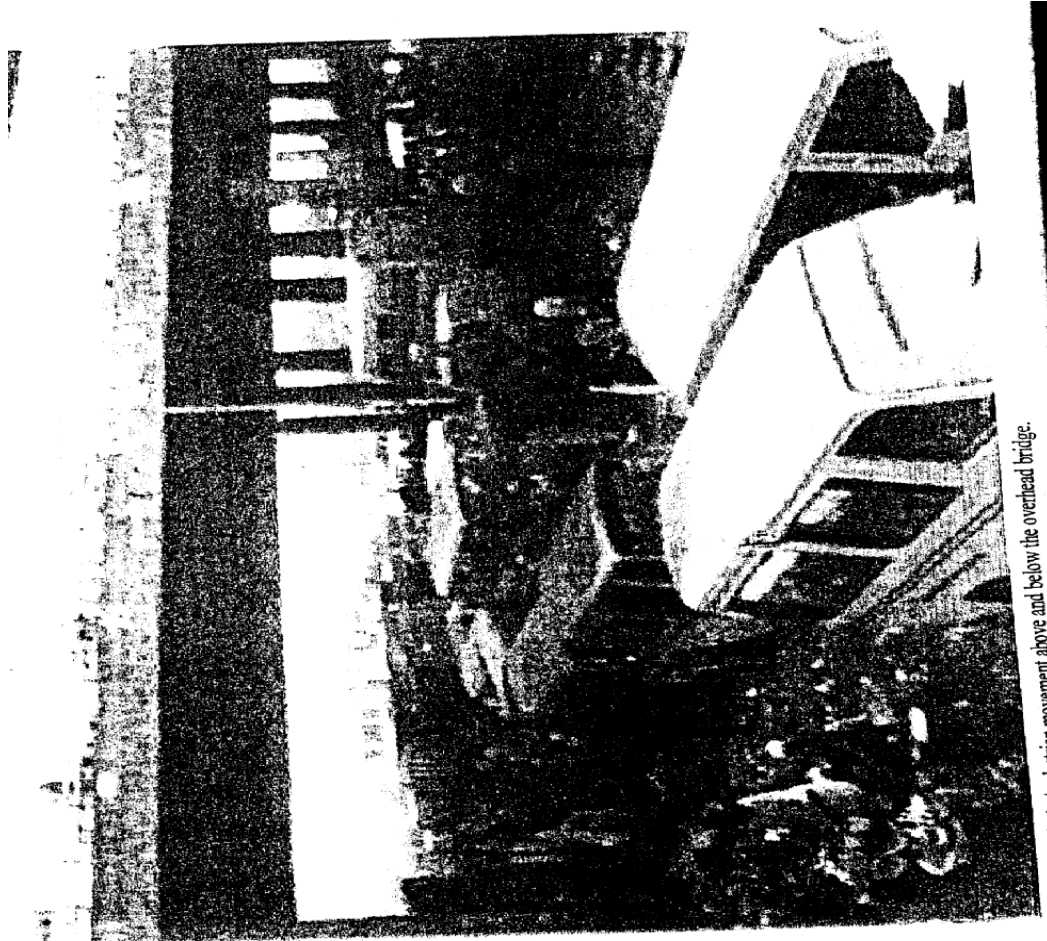
ADENTRAN Ogunsaṣṣa - Commercial activities



ALLEN AVENUE - Commercial buildings in residential districts



POLONO road after conversion



OSHODI vehicular/pedestrian movement above and below the overhead bridge.

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