

Assessment of Extent of Implementation of Greater Port Harcourt City Master Plan, 2009 -2019

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ABSTRACT: Throughout history, cities have played and still play important roles in the socio-economic and political advancement of any society they are found. As places of concentrated economic activity, cultural diversity, learning, innovation and creativity, cities are ‘hubs’ for ideas, commerce, culture, science, productivity, social development and much more. This study examined the greater Port Harcourt Master Plan, with a view to x-raying the extent of its implementation. Adopting qualitative research approach, data were sourced from primary and secondary sources to include site observation, interview granted to key informants and desktop review of government bulletins. Findings showed that the implementation of the Greater Port Harcourt Master Plan is broken into phases beginning with the Phase 1A layout. Our analysis indicates that most projects, contained in the plan are either not implemented or abandoned while others are at various stages of implementation. The idea of building a world class city in Rivers state is laudable, lack of continuity in government policies and programmes was identified as a major obstacle to the realization of the master plan objective. Going by the pace and level of implementation of the Master Plan and judging from the period under review, the target of achieving a world class city in Rivers state within the anticipated period of fifty (50) years is not feasible. The study advocates for political will and the need for continuity of the greater Port Harcourt city project by ensuring adequate and appropriate financial release needed to fund the project. Building a new city in line with the objective of Greater Port Harcourt city is the only way to decongest the present Port Harcourt and improve the quality of life of its residents.

Key words: Master Plan; Development; political will; plan implementation; Greater Port Harcourt City.

I. INTRODUCTION

Although cities occupy a small portion of the earth’s space (3%), they play important roles in the socio-economic and political advancement of any society they are found. Cities are ‘hubs for ideas, commerce, culture, science, productivity, social development and much more’. (Integrated Urban Development Framework, (IUDF, n.d) As places of concentrated economic activity, cultural diversity, learning, innovation and creativity, cities enable a country to build a dynamic competitive advantage that allow its people to advance socially and economically. it is for this reason that plans are usually put in place to ensure that the growth of cities are coordinated in such a way that the services and roles they play in any given society is sustained usually through the processes of master plans.

Master Plans are synthesis of the gamut of the aspirations and visions of stakeholders made into strategic policies, programs and projects documented (in text and graphics) for implementation by a government statutory agency(s) within a timeframe which is evaluated periodically. One of the fundamental aspects of achieving the goals set out in a Master is the implementation of such a Master Plan by the established implementation agency. The place of the implementation of a Master Plan being a document (that contains public policy, programs and projects) as major factor that determine urban development are embedded in politics controlled by the Government of the day (Keunta, 2010), Master Plan for urban development being one of the policy documents.

Master Plan influences the growth of urban population, land use, infrastructure development and service provision. Implementation of a Master Plan determines the level of development of the geographical area it is meant to address. A Master Plan is usually designed for a specific period of time, between ten

and thirty years. It consists of an inventory of existing development in the geographic area of interest as well as proposals for future development.

Port Harcourt has witnessed and is still witnessing rapid urban growth which understandably may be mainly due to the changes in its socio-economic and political status. These changes take expression in both rapid increases in population of the city and urban expansion but not without some consequences. Obinna, et al, (2010) opines that since attaining autonomy, Port Harcourt has turned into an inexorably urbanized and urban-situated society. Unfortunately, uncoordinated growth of Port Harcourt precipitates ugly satiations, in terms of poor housing condition and quality of the residential environment. These conditions have made Port Harcourt to acquire bad reputation both planning wise and socially due to the terrible overcrowding and inadequate facilities (Weje and Ameme, 2018).

One of the attempts to decongest Port Harcourt was the building of a new city known as the Greater Port Harcourt City and the preparation of master plan to guide its growth. The Greater Port Harcourt City project (GPHCP) is aimed at building 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” (Cookey-Gam, 2011, personal communication).

The Greater Port Harcourt City Master Plan (GPHCMP) is a holistic plan for the development of the Greater Port Harcourt City Area which spans eight Local Government Areas (LGA) of Rivers State, namely- the whole of Port Harcourt Municipality and parts of Oyigbo, Ogu/Bolo, Okrika, Obio/Akpor, Eleme, Etche and Ikwerre Local Government Areas. It covers an area of approximately 1,900 square kilometres (9,190,000 hectares of land) with a projected population of about two million people (Ede et al., 2011).

To give a legal backing and ensure a seamless implementation of the GPHCMP, the Greater Port Harcourt City Development Authority (GPHCDA) was established through an act of State Assembly on 2nd April, 2009.

As regulatory body, the GPHCDA is charged with the mandate of facilitating the implementation of GPHCMP. How well has the agency fared in the implementations of the various projects and facilities contained in the plan especially, in the Phase 1A. of the plan. The present study seeks to proffer answers to the above

by x-raying the level of implementation of GPHCMP, twelve years after its preparation.

II. STUDY AREA AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Port Harcourt City was a port city established in 1913 during British colonial rule. It was named after Lord Lewis Harcourt, the then British Secretary of State for the Colonies (Owei, et al., 2010; Ede et al., 2011). Located within the southern coastal fringe of Nigeria close to the south-eastern hinterland, the city was established as a rail and seaport terminal for the exportation of coal and agricultural produce from the hinterland (Wolpe, 1974; Ikechukwu, 2015). The discovery of oil and gas in the late 1950 accelerated the industrial and commercial expansion of the city leading to its uncontrolled development and rapid expansion.

By 1965, the municipality became the site of Nigeria’s largest harbour and the centre of Nigeria’s petroleum activities (Wolpe, 1974; Izeogu, 1989). The presence of oil and gas including healthy climate for business, exerts centripetal influence pulling people and firm into the city. Apart from the rise in population, the city has witnessed rapid urban expansion although much of it is uncoordinated. Presently, the city’s planning authority has struggled to cope with the rapid uncontrolled expansion of the city, high influx of people and overcrowding (ERML, 2009; Theis et al., 2009). Studies Owei, et al., 2010; Ede, et al., 2011, for example) observed that the existing infrastructure in the city has been in a deplorable condition, overburdened over time.

The GPHCMP area includes Port Harcourt City (Main Town) and the contiguous areas laid out for urban redevelopment, expansion and modernization. It is an agglomeration or conurbation of the old Port-Harcourt City (inner core of the 1975 Master Plan) and parts of other Local Government Areas (LGAs) to include: eight LGAs comprising of Port-Harcourt, Obio-Akpor, Okrika, Oyigbo, Ogu-Bolo, Etche, Eleme and Ikwerre. Oyigbo, Eleme, Okrika, and Ogu-Bolo LGAs. (Figure 1).

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Concept of the Master Plan

A Master Plan is a dynamic, multifaceted and comprehensive document that has different interpretations given by different scholars, but the intention has always been the same. For Kent (1964) master plan serves as “ordinances or general plan with official statement of a municipal

legislative body which set forth its major policies concerning desirable future physical development of an area”. Rogers (1999) described it as “a traditional document in Britain with master or comprehensive planning that develops a plan to cover development, use of land in order to maximize the overall benefit, and then ensuring adherence to the scheme in the urban area”. For Black (1975) Master plan is “the official public document adopted by a local government as a policy guide to decisions about the physical development of a community”. Whichever perspective the document is being looked upon, Master Plans are documents designed by Town Planners and allied professionals with legal backing which involves series of activities of all sectors in any geographical area.

However, the aim of a Master Plan determines the roles Master Plan plays. In any democratic society where the legislative body is involved in the master planning processes, a Master Plan document is one that should be able to draw the attention of stakeholders regarding challenges and opportunities (Black, 1975). Black (op cit), argues that a Master Plan should be able to initiate policies through long-range appropriate phasing of the plan

to provide a task for each period within its implementation period. Kent’s (1964) view on what a master plan is or does however is not different for him; a Master Plan should be able to serve as an avenue to convey policy directions by implementing agencies. He further asserts that a Master Plan document should also serve as an educational tool for those who access it. In the opinion of Roger (1999), a Master Plan should be able to serve as an avenue for exploration as it suggests many functions to the planning staff; the executives; operating agencies for physical development; voters; politician and the public at the drafting of the plan and its adoption. A Master Plan gives implementation direction for every development especially in the preparation of zoning ordinances, sub-division control, urban renewal, etc.

The planning philosophy guiding the design of GPHMP is the rational comprehensive planning model. Rational planning sometimes referred to as synoptic approach adopts a ‘top-down approach’ and uses the planning process to establish a uniform landscape and architectural style based on an idealized medieval village.

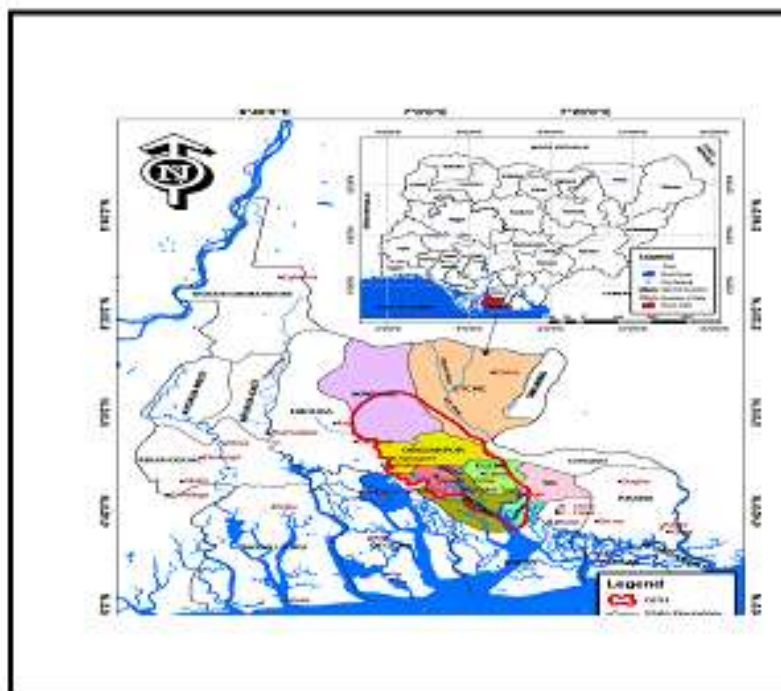


Figure .1: Greater Port Harcourt City.

Source: Office of the Surveyor-General, Rivers State, (2020)

No matter how a master plan is construed, simply put, it a comprehensive document aimed at

strategically developing areas of need as perceived by stakeholders in that locality. City development

underpins the conception and subsequent implementation of any Master Plan. An example of such is the Greater Port-Harcourt City Master Plan. The Master Plan (GPHCMP) is a 50-year strategic plan designed to integrate the old and new Port Harcourt City. The integrated Master Plan consists of transport, road, water, storm water, wastewater, land use, social infrastructure and energy (gas and electricity) plans developed to be implemented in three phases. All phases of the development (including existing and future projects referred to as 'GPHC Development Projects') are scheduled to be completed by 2060 (ERML, 2009).

The vision of the plan is "to transform the Greater Port-Harcourt Area into a world class city that is internationally recognised for excellence, and for the area to become the preferred destination for investors and tourists," (ERML, 2009: ES-1). Spatially, the plan covers an area of approximately 1,900 km² spanning eight Local Government Areas. It includes all of the old Port-Harcourt city and parts of Oyigbo, Okrika, Ogu/Bolo, Obio/Akpor, Ikwerre, Etche and Eleme Local Government Areas (LGAs) (ERML, 2009; GPHCDA, 2010). The New City will be an extension of the Old Port Harcourt City and will allow for urban growth through planning and de-densification of the Old City, while gradually integrating both cities into one single unit (GPHCDA, 2008, 2010).

While the Greater Port Harcourt City Development Authority (GPHCDA) is the authority responsible for implementing the GPHC Master Plan, control of development activities is

spatially shared between GPHCDA and the now, Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development (MPPUD). GPHCDA was established by the 'The Greater Port Harcourt City Development Authority Law' No. 2 of 2009 (GPHCDA, 2010). GPHCDA has been charged with the responsibility of facilitating the implementation of the GPHC Master Plan and developing the New City (GPHCDA, 2010). The objectives of the plan are primarily economic; that is, to enhance the standard of living and well-being of people in the city by transforming it into a functional, efficient, world class city with first-rate infrastructure and delivery of quality services (ERML, 2009; GPHCDA, 2010). The successful implementation of the Master Plan is projected to yield improved commerce options as well as increased investment opportunities. Apart from yielding economic benefits, previous studies have argued that economic development should also be placed in the environmental context for protecting environmental quality (Glasson et al., 2005; Ede, et al., 2011; UNECA, 2011; Akukwe and Ogbodo, 2015).

The comprehensive Master Plan comprises the land-use plan and other sectoral plans. Implementation of the entire Master Plan has been phased, commencing from Phase-1 through Phase 2 to the Phase-4 projects. Phase-1 layout is located in the northern axis of the Master Plan near the Port-Harcourt International Airport and is sub-divided into four manageable sub-phases A, B C and D (Figure 2).

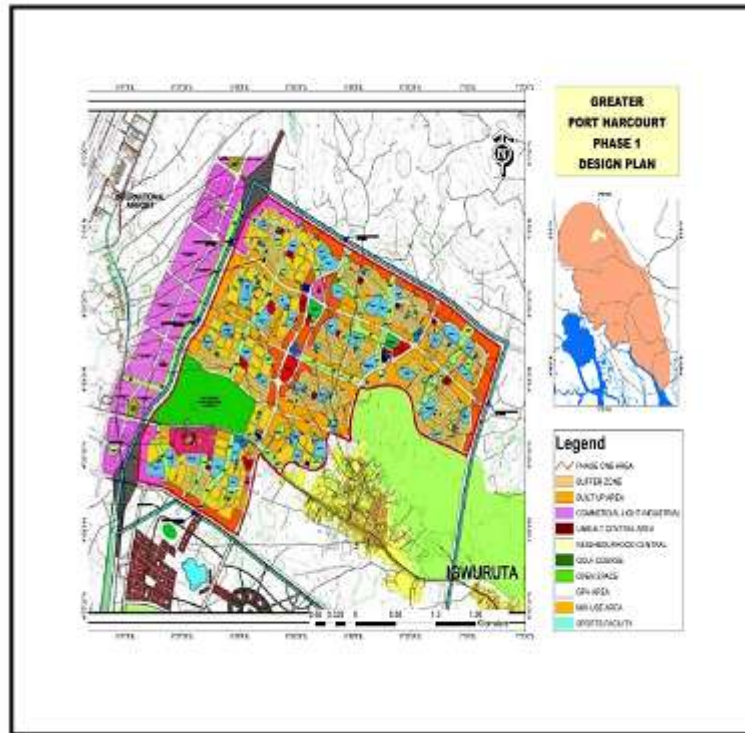


Figure 2: Phase 1 layout showing 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D Sub- Projects of the GPHCMP.

Source: Arcus Gibb, (2009)

Phase-2 layout is located in the eastern axis near Etche LGA, while Phase 3 Project is located in the south-eastern part of the Master Plan near Onne Seaport at Eleme. All phases will be connected by the Priority Road (M1 North-South Link Road), which is a dual-carriage freeway (ERML, 2009). The main anchors are Onne Seaport, Port-Harcourt Harbour and the Omagwa international Airport.

Generally, the land use plan consists of high, medium and low-density residential areas; commercial and industrial areas; cemetery; dumping site; International airport; University; open spaces, including riverine areas, golf courses, parks, gardens with landscape elements; rivers; metropolitan node; roads including major, minor and other roads as well as future growth areas. Facilities include 24- hour electricity supply infrastructure; a network of good roads/streets and public transportation system; drainage and storm water management system; engineered sanitary landfill for solid waste disposal; surveillance; and efficient security systems among other things (ERML, 2009; GPHCDA, 2010). The plan tried to take advantage of the two transport nodes (Air and sea ports) in its development agenda.

There have been previous studies in the area concentrating on poor implementation of master plan. For instance, Weje and Ameme (2015)

worked on Evaluation of Plan Implementation: Peri-Urban Development and Diobu Layout plan, 1975-2018. Using Google satellite imageries at different epochs, the study uncovered that the present growth of Diobu (a neighborhood in Port Harcourt do not conform with the Master plan prepared for it in 1975 due to poor plan implementation.

IV. METHODS AND MATERIALS

The study leans on qualitative research approach since it does not purport an objective reality of the subjects under investigation. Both primary and secondary sources of data were utilized. Primary data came through direct observation and site visits to the project area, in-depth interview granted to carefully selected key informants including staff of GPHCDA. Secondary data were sourced from published government official bulletins, greater Port Harcourt City Master Plan, and information gathered concerning the Greater Port Harcourt new City project through desk-top reviews. Univariate statistics such as percentages were used for data analysis. To enhance comprehension, results were presented in charts, tables and graphs.

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Extent of implementation of Greater Port Harcourt City Master Plan

The implementation of the GPHC Master Plan was broken into phases and to jumpstart development, the Phase 1 layout was sub-divided into manageable sections referred to as Phases 1A, B, C and D (See Figure. 2). The pilot phase was 1A located directly behind the Port Harcourt International Airport Hotel and is bordered by Professor Tam David-West Road which is opposite the Port Harcourt International Airport (see Plates 1- 6).

The layout for Phase 1A has a land mass of 685ha (6,850 km²). This layout comprises private residential neighbourhoods and mixed use complexes and is to house the following 212ha Rivers State University of Science and Technology site, the 50ha Sports Village site, the Mega Hospital complex site, 3,000 units of housing and commercial developments, in terms of bulk infrastructural development, the following projects are to be carried out in the Phase 1A city project:

- a. Abstraction and water treatment works, reservation, bulk pipelines and pump stations;
- b. Water reticulation Phase 1A New City;
- c. Reticulation sewers Phase 1A New City;
- d. Internal roads Phase 1A New City;
- e. Water management facility for Phase 1A;
- f. Electrical distribution and reticulation Phase 1A New City;
- g. Water treatment works at Ogbogoro Phase 1;
- h. Bulk storm water infrastructure for the New City;
- i. M10 Road from the Airport to Onne;
- j. Engineered landfill site for Phase 1; and
- k. Transmission line network from Rumuosi to the New City for Phase 1A

Our investigation further reveals that, in addition, the Greater Port Harcourt City Development Authority (GPHCDA) has also commenced the bidding process for the delivery of the under listed services and consultancies for the development of the New City, such as:

- a. Preparation of detailed engineering drawings for bulk infrastructure, reticulation network and municipal services for the Central Business District (CBD);
- b. Building of the head office of the Authority in the CBD; and
- c. Housing development and some public buildings e.g. Police Station, Fire Service Station and a Model Primary School.

However, a case by case assessment of the level of implementation of the projects in the phase

1A shows that the outlined projects and facilities are at different stages of completion as shown in table 1

Our findings revealed that the construction of Priority Roads, which would provide access to major locations such as the New Rivers State University and the Central Business District and connecting the M10 has reached only 14% implementation.

Although the construction of Internal Township Services, have commenced, the water treatment plant, electricity, sewage, gas lines, construction of other sizes of roads/streets, paved walk ways and waste management facilities have only gotten to 20% completion.

The construction of the M10 Freeway (which is an eight-lane carriage way) which ought to start from Professor Tam David-West Boulevard through the Port Harcourt/Owerri road is 18% implemented and this includes the pillars for the interchanges.

Further analysis revealed that the Temporary Water Supply with 2.5ML capacity per day borehole, 500KL low level reservoir for Phase 1A demand of 2.5ML/day for initial 5,000 houses including chlorination systems for disinfection is at 90% completion while the construction of the sports precinct access road/street with lighting which is an access road into sports precinct and also expansion of Port Harcourt/ Owerri Road with street lighting is 80% implemented.

Also the Interim bulk services- a 33KVA Electricity Supply and Emergency bulk storm water canal detention pond is 60% completed (plates 1-6). Other projects include: the construction of Interim bulk services: 33KVA Electricity Supply 60% completion, construction of Temporary Water Supply, (90%), Construction of M10 Freeway, 18%, Internal Township Services, 24% while the Construction of Priority Roads has only reached 14% completion.

In terms of cost, the total amount earmarked for the aforementioned projects is Thirty-Seven Billion, Five Hundred and Six Million, Sixty Two Thousand, Four Hundred and Sixty Seven Naira Twelve Kobo (N37, 576,062,467.12).

One intriguing revelations made in the study is the fact that although the implementation of the Greater Port Harcourt City Master Plan is ongoing, our analysis showed that its pace in terms of real implementation is rather too slow and raises question as to whether the project has been abandoned. Our findings revealed that the

implementation of the phase 1A of Master Plan ought to commence with the following projects: reticulation of water, electricity, sewage, gas lines, construction of roads/streets, paved walk ways and waste management facility.

To be sure, most of these projects were either never implemented or partially implemented. Information gathered from key informants indicates that with change in government at the state level in 2015, the Greater Port Harcourt project was brought to a halt and abandoned. The above implicitly indicates that, with every change of government comes the uncertainty about the continuation of an initiated project. This culminates

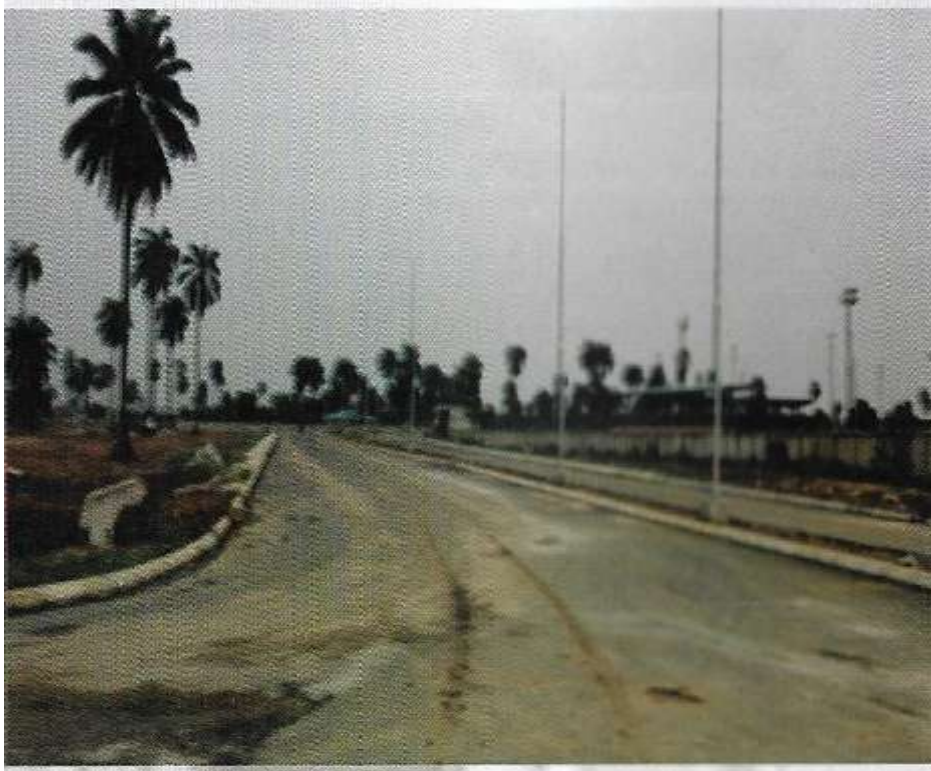
in an unstable policy environment, which is a scare for investors especially multinationals.

Apart from absence of political will for continuity other challenges identified for the poor implementation of the greater port Harcourt project included the palpable absence of institutional capacity, inadequate staffing, lack of equipment and other requisite facilities to monitor the implementation of the Master Plan, issue of jurisdiction especially with the state Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development. All these constitute a clog in the in smooth implementation of the Master plan.



Plate.6: Construction of Internal Township Roads

Source: Field Survey, (March 2020)



**Plate.1 Construction of the Sports
Precinct Access Road/Street Lightings**

Source: Field Survey, (March, 2020)



Plate. 3: Emergency Bulk Storm Water Canal Detention Pond

Source: Author's Field Survey, (March 2020)



Plate.4: 33kva Electricity Supply

Source: Field Survey, (March, 2020)



2 Plate. 5: Temporary Water Supply System

Title of Project	Date of Contract	Contractor	Scope	Duration of Contract	Contract Sum (₦)	Percentage Completion
Construction of the sports precinct access road/street lighting (See Plate 4.1).	4 th May 2011	CGGC Project Ltd.	Access road into sports precinct and also expansion of Port Harcourt/Owerri Road with street lighting	37 weeks	4,176,455,799.05	80%
Emergency bulk storm water canal detention pond (See Plate 4.).	4 th May, 2011	CGGC Project Ltd.		37 weeks	570,575,796.90	Completed
Interim bulk services:33KVA Electricity Supply (See Plate 4.).	3 rd August, 2011	Weltek Limited		40Weeks	776,946,022.87	60%
Temporary Water Supply (See Plate 4.6).	16 th February, 2012	PCI Africa Ltd	2 * 5ML capacity per day borehole, 500KL low level reservoir for Phase 1A demand of 2.5ML/day for initial 5000 houses including Chlorination for disinfection	12Months	709,453,224.00	90%
Construction of M10 Freeway (See Plate 4.)	13 th February, 2012	Lubrik Construction Company Ltd	Dual Carriage Freeway from Prof. Tam David-West Road to Port Harcourt/Owerri road at the Igwuruta axis including construction of three interchanges (bridges)	30 Months	30,935,747,386.00	18%
Internal Township Services (See Plate 4.)..	13 th February,2012	DSC International Ltd	Reticulation of water, electricity, sewage, gas lines, construction of	30 Months	9,500,000,000.00	24%

Construction of 9 th May, Deux Projects Priority Roads 2012 (See Plate 4.).	roads/streets paved walk ways and waste management facility.	Access roads leading to the New Rivers State University and the Central Business District and connecting the M10	24 Months	4, 569,663,582. 30	14%
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Source: Field Survey, (March 2020)

Projects Commenced Regarding Phase 1A Implementation

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study examined the Greater Port Harcourt City Master Plan with a view to examine its level of implementation. Although the idea of building a world class city is laudable, lack of continuity in government policies and programmes was identified as a major obstacle. Going by the pace and level of implementation of the Master Plan, and judging from the period under review, the target of achieving a world class city within the anticipated period of fifty (50) years is not feasible.

This study advocates for the needed political will and the need for continuity of the greater port Harcourt city project by ensuring adequate and appropriate financial release needed to fund the project.

Deliberate and concerted efforts is needed to through legislative enactment to ensure that planning agencies such as GPHCDA are independent and protected from the vagaries of party politicking. This is the only way to realize the lofty ideals of building a world class sustainable city as enunciated in greater port Harcourt City Project.

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