

# Assessment of Housing Conditions and Approved Building Plans in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State, Nigeria

Adenubi B., Arokoyu S.B. and Wizer C.H.

*Department of Geography and Environmental Management, University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt, Nigeria*

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## ABSTRACT

The study assessed the housing conditions and approved building plans in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State, Nigeria. A total of 59 registered estate developers in Port Harcourt metropolis were used for the purpose of obtaining information on the number of housing units their firm have been able to deliver and their impact in improving housing condition in Port Harcourt metropolis especially Port Harcourt and Obio/Akpor LGA from 1999 to 2019. Also, four hundred and ninety-seven (497) copies of questionnaire were administered from which four hundred and thirty eight were retrieved for further analysis. Secondary data were obtained from the National Population Commission (NPC) and archives of the two LGA's from the town planning office which helped to get information on the building plan approvals and permits showing the locations and number of housing units in the metropolis from 1999 to 2019. Descriptive statistics were used for the data analysis. Results showed that females participated in the study than their male counterparts and most of the respondents were singles. In addition, many of the respondents were literate as 57% obtained first degree. Findings showed that majority (39%) of the types of the residential buildings were separate buildings and followed by single room (29%). The dominated mode of accommodation was rented (71.7%) and the most occupancy ration per room was less than five persons per room (71.7%). Of the total number of the number of buildings approved between 1999 and 2019 in the study area, 5,573 were the inputs by private developers. The study recommended among others that there is need for government to facilitate legal development, hence reviewing the legal and regulatory framework for easy access of land and houses.

**Keywords:** Housing conditions, Approved plans, Buildings, Planning office, Estate developers

## I. INTRODUCTION

Housing plays a major role in the development of any country economically, socially, physically and financially. However, in the world today developing countries are in rare need of housing provision that is why country like Nigeria is faced with the challenge of inadequate housing provision for the citizen coupled with its global positioning as an emerging economy that needs to attract foreign investments, and to compete favourably in the global scene has heightened the need to examine critically how the impact of private sectors can help in housing delivery. Most cities, in the bid to improve the quality of life of her citizens have undergone several administrations, adopted policy after policy, promulgated several laws and decrees, and established institutions yet to no avail. The system has not yielded the desired result, leaving the economy in an atrocious state.

Private sector in Nigeria have shown much concern on the issue of housing provision to its citizens by a way of reducing the number of people that are homeless thereby ensuring the accessibility of adequate housing. According to Gresham (2010) the history of housing development in Nigeria is driven by private sector. That is to say that the private sector contributes a larger proportion of housing stock in the country. The private sector in the housing delivery includes individuals and corporate organizations. The sector provides houses for their direct use, for rental or sale for the citizen. The sector has made much impact on housing delivery creating room for scholars to suggest that the government should encourage and make laws favourably for the private sector to meet the housing need of the people. Similarly, Freedman (2012) also was of the opinion

that housing delivery should be left to the private sector to manage.

The provision of housing has always been of a great necessity to man. It is very important to the existence of human as it ranks among the top three needs of man. It is accepted universally as the second most important essential need after food. Housing according to (Olotuah, 2000) reflects cultural, social and economic value of a society and could be seen as one of the best historical evidence of the civilization of a country. In fact, housing constitutes the largest investment decision in the life time of an average family in most part of the world. It comprises of a number of facilities, services and utilities which links families and individual in the communities which it involves.

The United Nations (UN, 1976) defines housing as the physical environment in which a family, the basic unit of the society must develop. According to the National Housing Policy (NHP, 2012) housing is defined as a functional shelter in a proper setting in a neighborhood supported by sustainable maintenance of the built environment for the day to day living and activities of individuals and families within the community. Despite the importance of housing needs, most developing countries including Nigeria are to meet these housing needs. The study area Port Harcourt has overtime witnessed inadequate provision of housing delivery due to its increase in population which is as a result of migration of people from the rural region to the urban region, increase in job opportunities from oil boom since 1970's leading to the location of multinational oil companies in the city. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2016), report that Nigerian towns are growing without adequate planning that is why millions of people live in sub-standard and sub-human environment. This situation has created a demand and supply gap in the provision of housing to the citizens.

UN and population reference Bureau (2008) in 2011 reported that the world population will surpass 7 billion and will increase to over 9 billion by mid-century of the twenty-first century. This will result to the increase in demand or availability of houses. The federal government of Nigeria in view of the increase in population especially in our urban cities has established a lot of financial institutions that could be of help to this housing situation. In 1977, the federal government promulgated degree No7 to establish the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria (FMBN) to help meet the housing needs of all citizens of the country. The FMBN legal framework was not sufficient to affect its apex role, because of this; the

Federal Government in 1989 promulgated another degree No.59 to establish a Primary Mortgage Institutions (PMIS) though it was incorporated in 1992 with the corporate affairs commission. The purpose was to encourage the financial institution capable of mobilizing saving and making loans available for people (individuals, private company) to popularize home by building their own house and for large scale private builders building for sale.

In addition, the National Housing Policy (NHP) in 1992 Decree No3, also was established to ensure possible solution to housing needs. The sole aim of this policy established was to make available affordable housing to the citizens. Between 1994 and 1998, the National Housing Policy was to provide 121,000 housing units and continuously ensure that there is flow of fund for housing construction and delivery. Prior to the millennium, the housing policy formulated in the year 2000 was pursued rigorously but due to administrative issues, it was difficult to be realized. Like other developing countries, Nigeria has committed herself in providing houses for her citizens though have not been efficient and sufficient. Nigeria with a population of about 178 million people is currently facing a National housing deficit of about 17 million units. In 1991, the housing deficit was at 7 million, it has since increased from 7 million in 1991, to 12 million in 2001, 14 million in 2010 and presently 17 million units. The World Bank study projects that the cost of building this 17 million housing deficit is N59.5 trillion. Therefore, we need 700,000 additional units each year to have a chance of building this huge gap and for the government to raise the capital to be able to tackle the housing problem eventually was also a serious problem. Thus, it became a difficult task to actually address the housing needs of the people. Across the globe, government have come to realize that the provision of housing in the country cannot be efficient and effectively provided by the public sector thereby creating room for private sectors to be involved in housing delivery.

It is believed that sustainable housing provision takes a gradual, continuous process in meeting the needs of the populace especially the poor or low income earners who are not capable of owing or providing accommodation for themselves. Housing strategies must be put in place for adequate provision of housing in any country. In many developed and developing countries, the private sectors plays an important role in the provision of housing mostly for sale or rent both for the high, medium and low income groups. Adequate housing provision demands proper

definition of housing needs and full participation of the private sector. No doubt, the private sectors are faced with so many difficulties which have hindered the adequate provision of housing in terms of quality and quantity. According to (Windapo,2007) the involvement of the private sector goes beyond construction of houses for sale and rent, they help in the manufacturing of all types of building materials, supply of capital and labour. There are many works on housing situation globally but none of them addressed the issue of the situation in Nigeria especially in Port Harcourt Metropolis in which this present study is focusing at.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State, Nigeria (Figure 1) which comprises Port Harcourt City Council and Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. It is located on latitude 04° 48' and 05° 00'N of the Equator and

longitude 06° 55'and 07° 10'E of the Greenwich Meridian. Port Harcourt Metropolis covers an area of 387.261000 (sq.km). Port Harcourt is the Capital City of Rivers State of Nigeria. The study area has a tropical monsoon climate with mean annual temperature of 28°C and annual rainfall over 2500mm. The relative humidity is very high with an annual mean of 85%. The relief is generally lowland which has an average of elevation between 20m and 30m above sea level and the geology of the area comprises basically of alluvial sedimentary basin and basement complex. The vegetation found in this area includes raffia palms, thick mangrove forest and light rain forest. The soil is usually sandy or sandy loam underlain by a layer of impervious pan and is always leached due to the heavy rainfall. The study area is well drained with both fresh and salt water. The salt water is caused by the intrusion of sea water inland, thereby making the water slightly salty.

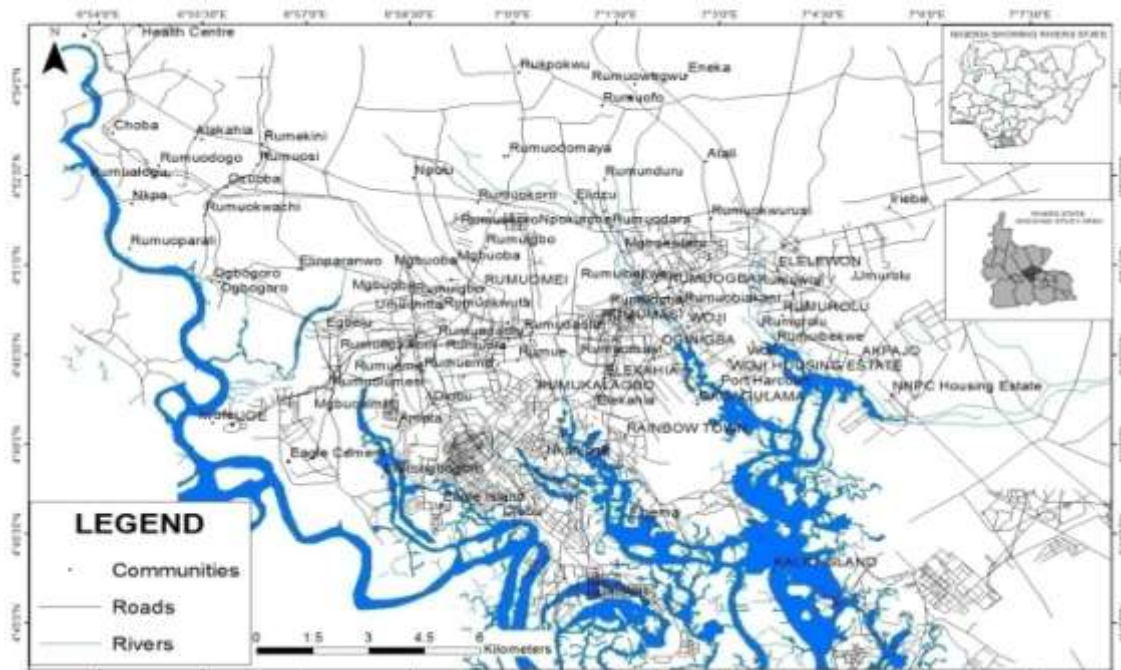


Figure 1. Port Harcourt metropolis showing road networks, communities and drainage

Primary and secondary data were used for the study. The primary data were collected through administration of questionnaires to all registered estate developers in Port Harcourt metropolis for the purpose of obtaining information on the number of housing units their firm have been able to deliver and their impact in improving housing condition in Port Harcourt metropolis especially Port Harcourt and Obio/Akpor LGA from 1999 to 2019.

Secondary data were obtained from the National Population Commission (NPC) hence, the aggregate population of the two Local Government under study (Port Harcourt and Obio/Akpor LGA) from 1999 to 2019 considering the population census of 1991 as the baseline and then be projected to 2016 and 2019 which will guide in understanding the population increase and the growth of Port Harcourt metropolis. Data were

obtained from the archives of the two LGA's from the town planning office which helped to get information on the building plan approvals and permits showing the locations and number of housing units in the metropolis from 1999 to 2019. This aid the generation of coordinates from the survey plan supported by Google derived images of the study area to show the spatial extent development induced by the private developers.

The focus of this research tends towards assessing the performance of private sector in housing delivery on improving the quality and quantity of housing in two LGA (Port Harcourt and Obio/Akpor) in Port Harcourt metropolis of Rivers State. All the fifty-nine (59) REDANs registered under private developers in Rivers state involved in housing projects was included in the study. The second category of people is the professionals into housing development. Professionals here involve the Architects, Builders, Estate Surveyors/valuers and Planners. Total number of registered Architectural firms in Port Harcourt is 195 in number, building service providers which is one hundred and two (102), number of registered Estate

Surveyors/valuers which is one hundred and sixteen (116) and finally number of town planning firms in Port Harcourt which is twenty five (25) making a total of four hundred and thirty-eight (438) respondents. The target population is all the firms and individual servicing and/or benefiting from the activities of building profession in the study area (Real Estate Development Association of Nigeria in Port Harcourt (REDAN) and Professionals in the building industry and residents. The questionnaire for each firm was administered to the members of the firm and association. The sample size for comprehensiveness was the entire 438 firms. This value was distributed across and within each category of professionals enumerated for the study. The questionnaires for each firm were administered to the members of the firm. Therefore the total sample size used for the study is four hundred and ninety-seven (497); from which four hundred and thirty eight were retrieved for further analysis. The methods of analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics described the analysis in form of frequency and percentage.

**Table 1: Sampling Size for the Professionals**

Professionals	Population Size (Number of firms)	Sample Size
Architects	195	195
Estate Surveyors and Valuers	116	116
Building Contractors	102	102
Town Planning Firms	25	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>438</b>

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents

In this first section of the survey, questions about housing professionals' sex, age, marital status, educational qualification and occupation were asked in order to explore the housing professionals' socio-economic characteristics (Table 2). The sex distribution of questionnaires retrieved from professionals in the housing sector shows that the female participation was more than the male with a total count of 199 resulting to 61 percent as against 125 (39) percent of the male folk. Majority of the housing professionals falls within the youthful age of 26-35. 60 percent of respondents were singles although some did not disclose their marital status. The bio data of the respondents retrieved from professionals in the housing sectors shows that there is more female participation than males given a tune of 61 per cent of the respondents to female folks and 39 per cent to the male folks. Majority of these falls within the youthful age of 26-35 followed by those within the age bracket of 36-45 accounting for 22

per cent of respondents and thirdly the age of 46-55 accounting for 20 per cent of respondents. The least in this category are those within the age bracket of 20-25 years followed from the bottom by those above 56 years.

Maritally, most of the respondents in the tune of 60 per cent were single, 30 per cent married, 3 percent divorced while 8 per cent of the respondent did not disclosed their marital status. In Educational qualification, there is a reasonable number of persons that possess the first degree as their minimum qualification, this accounted for 57 percent of the respondents. Other category of participants in the housing sector who hold secondary school certificate accounted for 22 per cent of the respondents, while those with Masters and Doctorate certificate accounted for 15 and 3 per cent respectively, with majority of these categories working as self-employed. These self-employed are individuals who embark on different programs within their professionals strata to ensure housing delivery. This category of individuals accounted for 40 per cent of respondent. Others who

work in corporate organizations made up 39 per cent of the respondents. cent of the respondents.  
 cent of respondents and the retiree made up 16 per

**Table 2. Bio Data of Respondents**

Demography	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	125	39
	Female	199	61
Age	20-25	3	1
	26-35	160	49
	36-45	70	22
	46-55	64	20
	56 above	27	8
Marital Status	Married	96	30
	Single	194	60
	Divorced	8	3
	Others	26	8
Educational Qualification	Primary	11	3
	Secondary	70	22
	First Degree	186	57
	Master Degree	49	15
Occupation	PhD	8	3
	Student	0	0
	House wife	1	0
	Trading	2	1
	Civil Servant	7	2
	Cooperate Organization	125	39
	Retired	52	16
Self Employed	137	42	

**Types of Residential Building**

Seven major types of residential building were found in Port Harcourt based on the responses of the respondents. They are separate building, traditional and hut structures, blocks of flats, semi-detached, single room, informal dwelling and others (Table 3).It indicates that majority of the respondents were of the opinion that separate buildings are more in the study area accounting for 39 percent, traditional /hut structures accounted for 0.3 percent, the data also showed that blocks of flats accounted for 22 percent, semi-detached houses accounted for 6.4 percent while single

rooms, informal dwellings and others accounting for 29, 1.6 and 1.7 respectively. It all implies that there are more of separate buildings in the study area which could be as a result of income level which is a determinant factor in terms of the residents' choice of living. The data showed that single rooms ranked second which may be related to the cost of rent followed by blocks of flats mostly built by the government. Traditional structures and huts also known as batcher were the least according to the respondents hence such structures in the metropolis are facing away due to the level of civilization.

**Table 3.Types of Residential Buildings**

Types	Frequency	Percentage
Separate building	126	39
Traditional/hut structures	1	0.3
Blocks of flat	71	22

Semi detached	21	6.4
Single room	94	29
Informal dwelling	5	1.6
Others	6	1.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>100</b>

**Mode of Accommodation**

Table 4 shows mode of accommodation among the inhabitants in the study area. The mode of accommodation common in the study area are classified into six which are; owner occupiers, owned not paid, rented, occupied free squatting and others. The study showed that owners occupier accounted for 20 percent which indicates the percentage of people that live in their own apartment in port Harcourt, owned but not yet paid accounted for 0.9, rented accounted for 71.7 while free occupied, squatting and others were accounted for 5.7, 0.75 and 0.9 respectively. The study revealed that a higher percentage of people in Port

Harcourt live on rent due to factors such as location, availability of facilities, population and cost of building materials. According to Ekenta, (2015) the first in the ranking is location factor considering proximity to work and access to public places may have significant effect on peoples choices followed by facility availability due to comfort and convenience enjoyed in the properties in spite of the upward movement of rent in the metropolis. Owners’ occupier which was the second could be due to low income earning of the residence and also the effect of high cost of building materials.

**Table 4. Mode of Accommodation**

Types	Frequency	Percentage
Owner occupier	66	20
Owned not paid	3	0.9
Rented	232	71.7
Occupied free	18	5.7
Squatting	2	0.75
Others	3	0.9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>100</b>

**Occupancy Ratio per Room**

The occupancy ratios per room were classified into four categories, which include less than four persons per room, five persons per room, six persons per room and above six persons per room. Table 5 revealed that majority of the respondents in the study area lives in a household range of less than four persons per room which accounted for 71.7 of the entire population sampled. Residents living within the range of five

persons per room in a household accounted for 9.4 percent, while six persons per room accounted for 2.2 percent. Above six persons per room in a household accounted for 16.7 percent. This clearly shows that most of the apartment in the study area is congested as the occupancy ratio of 1 person per room is exceeded except for residential areas for high income earners. This also puts the health of the residence at high risk.

**Table 5. Occupancy Ratio per Room**

Character	Frequency	Percentage
Less than five persons per room	232	71.7
Five persons per room	31	9.4
Six persons per room	7	2.2
Above six persons per room	54	16.7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>100</b>

**Approved Building Plans Analysis in PHALGA and OBALGA**

Table 6 showed the records of approved building plans in Port-Harcourt as obtained from Port-Harcourt city local government area. It is

obvious that the total number of buildings approved in Port-Harcourt city local government from 1999 to 2019 is 5,549. The result reveals that averagely there is 4 percent increase in housing every year

except for the period between 2007 and 2012 which had an average of 8 percent.

Table 7 showed the records of approved building plans in Obio-Akpor Registered and Approved Building Plans (1999 - 2019). It is obvious that the total number of buildings approved in Port-Harcourt City Local Government from 1999 to 2019 was 40,351. The result reveals that averagely there is 5 percent increase in housing every year with an exception for 2019 which had almost 9 percent increase. The total numbers of registered, approved, building plans were analysed in Table 8. The result on the registered building plans approved in Port-Harcourt metropolis from 1999 to 2019 reveals a considerable increase in the number of building plans approved in the study area. The initial response from 1999 to early 2000 was slow but over the year there was a rapid improvement due to government commitment to housing development hence the participation of private sector improved. Obviously, every developer requires the building plan approval to carry out development on land. In Port-Harcourt metropolis, building approval process before now was undergoing a lot of challenges making it difficult for developers and interested individuals to go into housing delivery not until from 2007 building plans registration and approval improved due to the government administration at that time that helped to change the process involved in getting building plans approved. The major challenge then was the long delay of getting the approval because of the transfer of file process from one government agency to the other for verification and the activities of illegal building agents generally called “touts”. This contributed in affecting the development of the city making developers tired of waiting for their plans to be approved and the fear of being negatively impacted

by those “touts”. The outcome of this challenge led to poor planning of the city, uncertified structures and building collapse. The River state government in 2012 introduced the one-stop-policy that help to address the issue hence, all building plans are carried out in one office making it easier and faster for developers to get their approval within a week.

The total number of registered approved building plans in Port-Harcourt is 45,900, Obio/Akpor LGA having the highest number of approved building plans (80%) due to the movement of development from Port Harcourt LGA to Obio/Akpor and availability of space. The result showed that 2019 had the highest number of registered approved plans within the period under study accounting for 8.5 percent followed by 2018 and 2010 accounting for 7.5 and 7.1 respectively implying that more houses were built in 2010, 2018 and 2019. This is in conformity with the works of Ayotamuno, (2018) (Table 9). In examining the housing situation of Port Harcourt, privately built estates and housing units were also evaluated since the private sector play more roles in housing development in Port Harcourt.

Data from the Table 9 showed the total number of housing units and estates built by private sector in Port Harcourt since they are the major contributors to housing delivery. It reveals that 5,573 housing units and 89 housing estates were provided by the private sector. From every indication, the year 2019 had the highest number of housing unit which is in line with the result gotten from the list of registered approved building plans, while the highest numbers of estates were built in 2012. The percentage input by private developers each year reveals that private developers in 2001 delivered above 100 percent in housing while other years housing delivery were not too encouraging compared to the number of buildings approved.

**Table 6. Port-Harcourt City Registered and Approved Building Plans (1999 - 2019)**

s/n	Year	No of building approved	Percentage
1	1999	317	5.7
2	2000	111	2.0
3	2001	311	5.6
4	2002	266	4.8
5	2003	319	5.7
6	2004	124	2.2
7	2005	-	-
8	2006	-	-
9	2007	455	8.2
10	2008	426	7.7
11	2009	425	7.7
12	2010	514	9.2
13	2011	513	9.2
14	2012	408	7.3

15	2013	227	4.1
16	2014	211	3.8
17	2015	-	-
18	2016	214	3.9
19	2017	229	4.1
20	2018	214	3.9
21	2019	265	4.8
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>5,549</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: PHALGA, 2020

**Table 7. Obio-Akpor Registered and Approved Building Plans (1999 - 2019)**

s/n	Year	No of building approved	Percentage
1	1999	-	-
2	2000	-	-
3	2001	-	-
4	2002	1601	3.9
5	2003	1275	3.2
6	2004	1294	3.2
7	2005	1896	4.7
8	2006	1926	4.8
9	2007	1687	4.2
10	2008	2029	5.0
11	2009	2107	5.2
12	2010	2740	6.8
13	2011	2122	5.3
14	2012	2632	6.5
15	2013	2010	4.9
16	2014	2432	6.0
17	2015	2231	5.5
18	2016	2612	6.5
19	2017	2901	7.2
20	2018	3225	7.9
21	2019	3631	8.9
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>40,351</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: OBALGA, 2020

**Table 8. Registered and Approved Building Plans (1999 - 2019)**

s/n	Year	No of building approved	Percentage
1	1999	317	0.7
2	2000	111	0.2
3	2001	311	0.7
4	2002	1867	4.0
5	2003	1594	3.5
6	2004	1418	3.1
7	2005	1896	4.1
8	2006	1926	4.2
9	2007	2142	4.7
10	2008	2455	5.3
11	2009	2532	5.5
12	2010	3254	7.1
13	2011	2635	5.7
14	2012	3040	6.6
15	2013	2237	4.9
16	2014	2643	5.8
17	2015	2231	4.9
18	2016	2826	6.2



19	2017	3130	6.8
20	2018	3439	7.5
21	2019	3896	8.5
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>45,900</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: PHALGA and OBALGA, 2020

**Table 9. Privately Built Estates and Total Housing Units (1999 -2019)**

Year	No of Estates by private developers	No of Housing Units by private developers	No of building approved	Percentage of inputs by private developers
1999	2	20	317	6.3
2000	3	64	111	57.6
2001	15	366	311	117
2002	-	-	1867	-
2003	1	14	1594	0.8
2004	-	-	1418	-
2005	6	86	1896	4.5
2006	10	180	1926	0.09
2007	1	10	2142	0.004
2008	9	106	2455	4.3
2009	2	50	2532	1.9
2010	10	160	3254	4.9
2011	-	-	2635	-
2012	12	86	3040	2.8
2013	2	1,070	2237	47.8
2014	2	150	2643	5.7
2015	2	803	2231	35.9
2016	3	443	2826	15.6
2017	1	504	3130	16
2018	3	250	3439	7.3
2019	5	1,211	3896	31
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>5,573</b>	<b>45,900</b>	

Source: Ayotamuno, 2018

#### IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has assessed the housing situations in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State, Nigeria whereby it is shown that majority of the respondents were of the opinion that separate buildings are the highest while block of flats followed and the commonest mode of accommodation was rented apartment. Also, the number of persons living in most of the household range was less than four. The number of building approved in Port-Harcourt City Local Government was lower than the actual number of buildings built between 1999 and 2019. The study recommended that there is need for government to facilitate legal development, hence reviewing the legal and regulatory framework for easy access of land and houses which includes building regulations, easy access to Certificate of Occupancy and approval of development permits. Also, government policy on restructuring housing needs for rapid development

to take place should be ensured. It should be such that will encourage more participation of private sectors into housing delivery by speeding up land registration title, accessibility of loans with minimal interest over a period of years.

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