



CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF PRIVATE TOWN PLANNING PRACTICE IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA.

**Edmund Chinem Nwokaeze¹, Obiajunwa John Obiajunwa²*

^{1,2}Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Faculty of Environmental Science, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

*Corresponding Author: edmund.nwokaezec@ust.edu.ng; Orcid: 0009-0009-9757-0248

ABSTRACT :

Town Planning practice is an extremely comprehensive operation that requires a variety of skills on the part of its practitioners. There are observations that private practice in town planning is not lucrative beyond the public sector compared to other allied professions in the built environment. This study assesses the challenges and prospects of private town planning practice in Rivers State. The study adopted a mixed methods research approach using an explanatory sequential research design. Data were obtained from twelve (12) town planning firms based in Port Harcourt selected purposively and four (4) key informants; the Chairman, Rivers State Chapter of the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners, the Rivers State Representative in Town Planners Registration Council of Nigeria (TOPREC) and Directors Development Control in Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development and the Greater Port Harcourt City Development Authority. The study found 94 town planners and 22 town planning firms operating in Rivers State but only 12 firms are registered. The study further revealed that the major challenges of private town planning practice are political interference, poor implementation of development plans, lack of public and private sector collaboration, poor planning enlightenment and low patronage of planning services. Others are self-inflicted consequences such as; unethical behaviour of some town planners, poor mentorship and a lackluster planning environment with obsolete planning laws and regulations. The study recommends that for meaningful development through urban planning to take place in Rivers State, political dictations in professional decisions should be checked. TOPREC should redesign its registration process for enrolment of new professionals to make it more accessible and affordable, as well as standardize the accreditation process for town planning professionals to be better competitors in the global market. TOPREC and NITP should ensure compliance with the scale of fees for professional services. The Rivers State Government should implement fully the Rivers State Physical Planning and Development Law No. 6 of 2003 which will promote public sector planning and drive private practice. This will enhance the planning environment in Rivers State, boost private practice and reduce unemployment among graduate planners.

Keywords: Town Planning, Town Planners, Private practice.

INTRODUCTION :

Private practice in the Town Planning Profession over the years has encountered so many challenges in Rivers State ranging from unfavourable government policies, the Governors of the State appointing non-Town Planners as Commissioners of the Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development (MPP&UD), disobedience of the ethics of this noble profession, other professions like Architecture, Surveying, and Estate Managers taking up jobs of the Town Planners. There are complaints of young Planners not knowing the basics and essence of private Town Planning practice due to the lack of mentorship and the fact that private practice has become an all-comers affair. The planning system, which requires the government to play the leader's role in the preparation and implementation of development plans with the synergy of the private practitioners, is also ineffective in Rivers State.

Furthermore, the requirements for registering private firms in this profession are cumbersome and expensive. Private practitioners would prefer to practice casually without the establishment of proper firms and offices, a phenomenon referred to as 'briefcase practice'.

Town planning in Rivers State is gradually retrogressing as even student enrollment is low compared to other departments like Architecture, Surveying and Estate Management. Private practice in this noble profession looks almost impossible as there are external and internal factors affecting it and gradually, registered planners are showing less concern in their profession after spending years studying. This is not the situation in some other states in Nigeria where private practice is thriving and practitioners earn well. A proper assessment of the problems perturbing private town planning practice in Rivers State has become necessary.

Thus, this study aims to appraise the challenges and prospects of town planning private practice in Rivers State, with the following objectives;

- I. Identify the challenges of private Town Planning practice in Rivers State.
- II. Identify the number of registered Town Planners and Town Planning firms in Rivers State.
- III. Evaluate the viability and potential of private Town Planning practice in Rivers State.

LITERATURE REVIEW :

Concept of Planning

Planning is an activity concerned with making plans and proposals for the future, through the evaluation of alternatives, and with methods by which these processes may be achieved (Akue, 2020). It is an essential process in human endeavours including governance, administration and urban development (Ejumudo, 2008). Planning embraces the simple process of determining appropriate future action through a sequence of choices (Abubakar, 2022).

Planning is as old as mankind and it has been undertaken in all facets of human endeavour, including warfare, politics, administration and the social spheres (Ejumudo, 2008). Generically, planning has been described as what to do, how to do it and who is to do it (Koontz 2006). Planning involves thinking ahead, initiating and taking a pre-determined course of action and deciding in advance what should be done, how, when and by whom (Datta, 2010; Oyesiku, 1998; Faludi, 1973).

Town Planning

According to Hall (1974), town planning refers to planning with a spatial or geographical component in which the general objective is to provide for the spatial structure of activities or of land use which in some way is better than the pattern existing without planning. Essentially, it ensures that there is order in human settlement development and growth. In Nigeria, Town Planning also known as Urban and Regional Planning or Physical Planning is a discipline and a professional course of study that produces highly qualified and registered members (after taking the necessary professional exams), recognized by law and regulated by the Council of the profession known as Town Planners Registration Council of Nigeria (TOPREC) established on the 16th of January 1988 by Decree No 3 of 1988 now CAP T7 LFN, 2004 (Daramola, 2021). Town planning is concerned with the spatial ordering of land use both in the urban and rural settings to create functionally efficient and aesthetically pleasing physical environments for living, work, circulation and recreation (NITP, 1993).

Town Planner

According to Abubakar (2022), a town planner is one who attended an accredited urban and regional planning programme (in an accredited institution), passed all the prescribed academic and professional courses and awarded the prescribed qualification(s) and also passed the professional registration examination(s) conducted and registered by the Town Planners Registration Council of Nigeria (TOPREC). Furthermore, a town planner is an educated person who has gone through formal training in the basic tenets of planning, equipped with the requisite skill set to solve human settlement problems and achieve a desired future (Daramola, 2021). Simply put, town planners are the doctors of human settlements that take care of present and future maladies. A registered Town Planner uses the word Town Planner or its acronym (TPL.) before their name and is statutorily permitted to practice town planning but guided by the code of professional conduct and practice of the town planning profession (FRN, 1988).

Concept of Planning Education

Alferman (1992) described planning education as specialized training that is significantly distinct from architecture, engineering or the like to be recognized as independent training. Gwani (1988) was very specific in the description of planning education and branded it as physical planning education, and stated that it emphasizes the knowledge of the planning process, and the physical environment, the social, economic, ecological, technological and political context of planning. He concluded that planning education provides the skill and sensitivity in plan-making and implementation, including problem definition, analysis, synthesis, innovation, evaluation and communication.

Concept of Private Sector

Chong (2009) opined that the private sector constitutes the segment of the economy owned, managed and controlled by individuals and organizations seeking to generate profit. Companies in the private sector are usually free from state ownership or control. However, the private sector can sometimes collaborate with the government in a public-private partnership to jointly deliver a service or business venture to a community. Also, the private sector is a section of the national economy that the government does not own. The business conducted in this sector is carried out by companies or entrepreneurs who focus on profit maximization and customer satisfaction (Getz & Petersen, 2005). Career opportunities available to town planners in Nigeria have been documented by Nwokaeze (2025), wherein private practice is identified as a major category.

Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct for Urban and Regional Planning

Ethics is a system of moral principles; the rules of conduct recognised with respect to a particular class of human actions or a particular group, or culture (Nwokaeze & Nwokaeze, 2024; Ayinde, 2021). According to Ayinde (2021), the town planning profession is built on standards that are best described by the word “virtue” and hard-to-describe as something exuded, which is “trustworthiness.” The total of these is ethics. He further noted some challenges to professional ethics which are;

- I. Going along with the crowd
- II. Work versus family and societal pressure
- III. Greater and more aggressive unvoiced competition among professionals.

- IV. The temptations of executive salaries.
- V. When leaders mislead
- VI. Pursuit of selfish ambition.

It is also noted by that the Royal Town Planning Institute's Code of Professional Conduct, as constituted by the Royal Charter (Britain) exists to advance the science and art of planning for the benefit of the public. To achieve this, the Chartered Institute requires planning professionals to meet and maintain high standards of competence and conduct themselves in a way that inspires trust and confidence in the profession.

This document under the Chartered Institute's byelaws, a code of professional conduct and practice setting out the standards, ethics and professional behaviour expected of members. The Chartered Institute requires its members to adhere to five core principles, namely:

- I. Competence, honesty and integrity
- II. Independent professional judgment
- III. Due care and diligence
- IV. Equality and respect
- V. Professional behaviour

METHODOLOGY :

This study focused on the challenges and prospects of private town planning practice in Rivers State. It employed the mixed method which is a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches to collect data (Creswell & Tashakkori, 2007). This study followed the explanatory sequential design, beginning with the quantitative phase (registered town planners) and then the qualitative phase (firm owners). The qualitative findings are used to contextualize the quantitative data.

The 2024 list of registered planning firms in Nigeria by TOPREC accounted for 493 planning firms of which 12 are based in Rivers State. However, data from Rivers State Chapter of NITP indicate that 22 planning firms are operating in Rivers State.

Table 1: List of Town Planning Firms Operating in Rivers State

S/N	Town Planning Firms	Principal Partners
1	Opomatics Environmental Consult	TPL. Opiriba Karibi Ikiriko
2	Mopic Nig. Ltd.	TPL. Alloysius Iheanyi Nwuzi
3	Urban Evolution Consult	TPL. (Dr.) Tari Eyenghe
4	Bankol Planning Associates	TPL. (Dr.) Bankole J. Olumola
5	UPO Services Nigeria	TPL. Philip Umor Oghogh
6	Kings Associate	TPL. Azubuike Omadel Nweye
7	ChastBage Ventures	TPL. Bisco George
8	Lebeke Global Consult	TPL. Toghi Beauty
9	Dani Danico	TPL. Bright Godfrey Ameme
10	Hasreal Planning Consult	TPL. Harrison Isreal U.
11	Metromaxt International Ltd.	TPL. Ikechukwu Emmanuel
12	Jukel Consult	TPL. Ukeme Joshua
13	EL' Cumui Development Consultants Ltd.	TPL. (Dr.) Edmund C. Nwokaeze
14	Janaluv Consults	TPL. Chikagbum Wocha
15	Wince Ltd.	TPL. David Ogbariga
16	Forbis Consultants	TPL. Fortune Iruene
17	Vweroschlum Ltd.	TPL. Jerry Jinkon
18	Debbiedan konsults	TPL. Iyango Goerge
19	Always Ready	TPL. Kayii Prago
20	Leo Planning Consults	TPL. Umanubueso Georgwill
21	Mobedi Oil and Gas	TPL. Joel Harry
22	Aprioku Plan & Associates.	TPL. Mina Aprioku

Source: NITP Rivers State Chapter, 2024.

Since the inauguration of TOPREC in 1988, the number of registered Town Planners by the Council has continued to increase. As of 1990, the cumulative number of registered Town Planners was 247 and this has increased to 1074 in 2000 while by 2021, the number was 5,470. As of November 2024, the number of Registered town planners in Nigeria is 6309.

(See Table 2 below).

Table 2: Yearly Registration of Town Planners by Town Planners Registration Council (TOPREC) from 1990-2024

S/N	Year	No of Town Planners	Cumulative
1	1990	247	247
2	1991	120	367
3	1992	137	504
4	1993	64	568
5	1994	111	679
6	1995	997	776
7	1996	6	782
8	1997	53	835
9	1998	73	908
10	1999	140	1,048
11	2000	26	1,074
12	2001	156	1,230
13	2002	81	1,311

14	2003	64	1,375
15	2004	112	1,487
16	2005	87	1,574
17	2006	61	1,635
18	2007	127	1,762
19	2008	183	1,945
20	2009	151	2,096
21	2010	203	2,299
22	2011	264	2,563
23	2012	341	2,904
24	2013	297	3,201
25	2014	397	3,598
26	2015	300	3,892
27	2016	320	4,218
28	2017	430	4,638
29	2018	186	4,824
30	2019	38	4,962
31	2020	212	5,174
32	2021	296	5,470
33	2022	205	5,675
34	2023	288	5,963
35	2024	346	6,309

Source: TOPREC, 2024.

According to the TOPREC register Rivers State Chapter, there are 94 town planners in Rivers State. The population of the study is specifically made up of registered town planners and registered planning firms operating in Rivers State. Four (4) Key Informants namely; the Chapter Chairman of NITP Rivers State Chapter, Rivers State representative in TOPREC Council, Directors of Development Control in Greater Port Harcourt City Development Authority (GPHCDA) and the Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development (MPP&UD), were interviewed.

The purposive sampling technique was adopted in determining the sample size of the study. Fifty (50) Town Planners were selected from the ninety-four (94) registered town planners for questionnaire administration. Twelve (12) town planning firms were selected from the twenty-two (22) firms listed in Table 1. The sample represented over 50% of the total number of registered town planners and firms practicing in Rivers State. The firms selected are those that have regularized and have active registration status with TOPREC as of 2024.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS :

Challenges of Private Town Planning Practice

Table 3 shows the challenges in town planning private practice in Rivers State. 12.7% indicated political interference in planning decisions, 11.1% indicated insufficient and poor-quality data, and poor implementation of plans respectively. 9.5% indicated financial constraints and lack of inter-agency collaboration, and 8% chose the options; shortage of manpower, poor planning enlightenment, lack of public participation in planning and unethical behaviour of some town planners. Lack of adequate public and private sector consultation, and obsolete planning laws and regulations recorded 4.8%. 1.6% of respondents indicated poor mentorship, lack of political will and advisory role of planning machinery respectively.

Table 3: The Challenges in Town Planning Private Practice in Rivers State.

S/N	Challenges in Town Planning Private Practice in Rivers State	No.	%
1	Poor implementation of plans	7	11.1
2	Lack of public participation in planning	5	8
3	Advisory role of planning machinery	1	1.6
4	Financial constraints	6	9.5
5	Insufficient and poor-quality data	7	11.1
6	Lack of political will	1	1.6
7	Lack of adequate public/private sector consultation	3	4.8
8	Shortage of manpower	5	8
9	Political interference in planning decision	8	12.7
10	Poor planning enlightenment	5	8
11	Unethical behaviour of some town planners	5	8
12	Lack of inter-agency collaboration	6	9.5
13	Poor mentorship	1	1.6
14	Obsolete planning laws and regulations	3	4.8
Total		63	100

The effect of the challenges on the Planning Profession

All respondents affirmed that the challenges observed have negative consequences on the planning profession. They stated that it leads to low patronage of the town planners' services leading to a poor planning environment. Furthermore, it breeds a form of incoherence in the ordering of

development particularly regarding land use management with non-compliance to the planning regulations and standards. There are also complaints of professional colleagues short-changing the system by underpricing town planning jobs.

Evaluating the Viability of Private Town Planning Practice

Number of firms in active private practice

Fig.1 shows that 75% of the firms are in active private practice while 25% are not in active town planning practice.

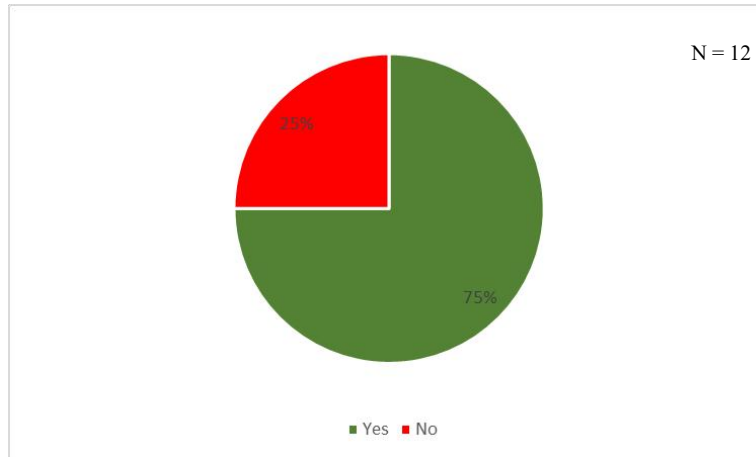


Fig. 1: Firms in active private planning practice

Firms up-to-date with taxes and statutory requirements

Fig. 2 shows that 75% of the firms are up-to-date with taxes and statutory requirements while 25% are not.

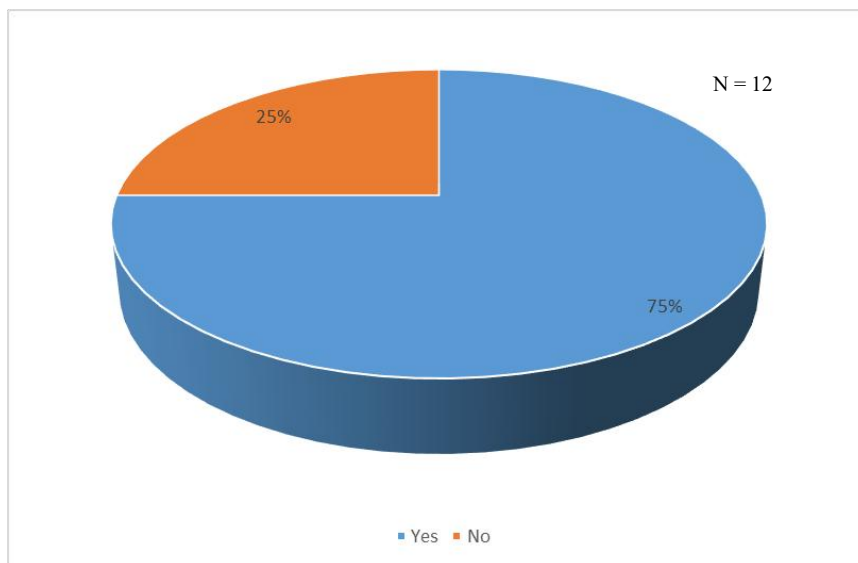


Fig. 2: Firm up-to-date with statutory requirements

Average Monthly Income Generated by Firm

Table 4 shows the average monthly income generated by firms. 33.3% of firms indicated that their monthly income was between N200,001 - N300,000 and N400,001 - N 1,000,000 respectively; 25% indicated that it was N300,001 -N 400,000; 16.7% of firms indicated that they generate between 100,001 - 200,000 and N400,001 - N1,000,000 respectively while 8.3% indicated they generate between N1,000,001 - N5,000,000 monthly. No firm generated less than ₦100,000 monthly and more than ₦ 5,000,000 monthly.

Table 4: Average Monthly income generated by firms

Monthly Average income	No	%
Less than ₦50,000	0	0
₦50,001 - ₦100,000	0	0
₦100,001 - ₦ 200,000	2	16.7
₦200,001 - ₦300,000	4	33.3
₦300,001 - ₦ 400,000	3	25.0

₦400,001 -₦ 1,000,000	2	16.7
₦1,000,001 - ₦5,000,000	1	8.3
₦ 5,000,001 and above	0	0
Total	12	100

Capability of Firms to Pay Staff, Rent and Sustain Practice

Fig. 3 shows whether the money generated by firms can pay staff and rent and sustain practice. 75% responded in the affirmative while 25% indicated No.

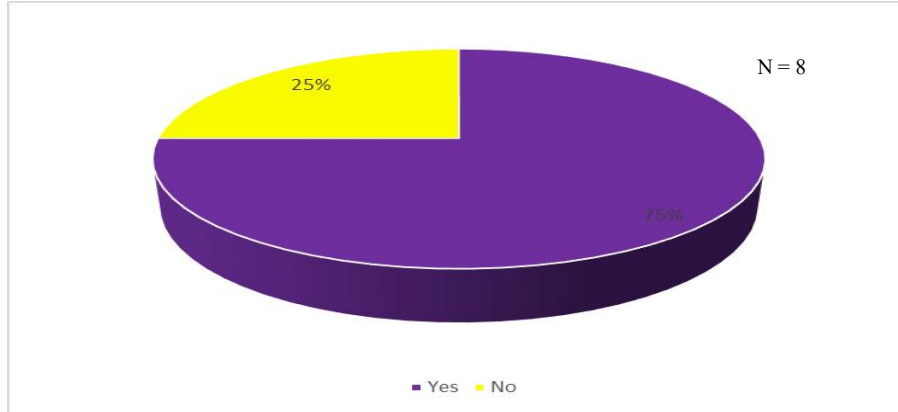


Fig. 3: Capability to pay Staff, Rent and Sustain Practice

Established Office Space

Key informants' data indicated that the majority of the firms in private practice do not have an established working space. Only 25% of the firms have established office spaces with staff employed. The reason given for this phenomenon is that the overhead cost of running an office is high and many firms cannot bear the cost.

Firms Registered with TOPREC and Membership of ATOPCON

Data was obtained from key informants; the Registrar, Town Planners Registration Council of Nigeria (TOPREC) and the President, Association of Town Planning Consultants of Nigeria (ATOPCON) revealed that 12 firms in Rivers State are registered with TOPREC and only 2 of the firms belong to ATOPCON. The other 10 firms practicing in the state are either not registered or have not regularized their registration and operating in breach of the regulation.

Type of Professional Services Rendered as a Private Practitioner

The data reveal that private practitioners provide the following professional services to clients: layout design, procurement of planning permits, and legal representation. Others are, the preparation of town planning technical reports, Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) and Site Analysis Report and Plan (SAR&P), transportation planning, traffic impact assessment (TIA), planning advocacy and advisory services, and socio-economic surveys.

Engagement in Other Non-Planning Activities as a Private Practitioner

Data from key informants revealed that 40% of Town planners in private practice engage in non-planning activities such as farming to cushion the effect of low-income turnover.

The viability of Town Planning Private Practice in Rivers State.

The responses on the viability of private town planning practices in Rivers State were a mixed bag of both positive and negative. Principal partners whose firms had a large clientele base and reasonable income affirmed that private practice was doing well. On the contrary, firms with low receipts reported that business was bad for private practitioners. They indicated that private practice is not viable at the moment due to low patronage and a poor planning environment, compared to other elite professions. However, they also observed that the opportunities for private practice in town planning are numerous and still emerging. These opportunities will become portent when the professional planners in the public and the private sectors close ranks to work together according to the tenets of the planning law and stop quackery in the system.

The Potentials of Private Town Planning Practice

The respondents listed the following as potentials of private practice in town planning; firstly, it fills the gaps that the public service alone cannot handle, such as third-party consultancy services between the private practitioner and clients (private or corporate developers, government). Others are: inculcating and putting the principles and concepts of town planning in the minds of the general public thereby leading to organized development, exploring the environment through research and development, and carrying out advocacy planning services.

Effectiveness of Private Town Planning Practice in Rivers State

Table 5 shows that 8.3% of respondents indicated that private town planning practice is very effective while on the other hand, 16.7% say it is very ineffective. 25% indicated that it is ineffective but 16.7% are of the view that it is effective. The highest value of 33.3% observed that it is fair.

Table 5: Effectiveness of Private Town Planning Practice in Port Harcourt

Effectiveness of Private Town Planning Practice in Rivers State	No.	%
Very effective	1	8.3
Effective	2	16.7
Fair	4	33.3
Ineffective	3	25
Very ineffective	2	16.7
Total	12	100

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION :

Challenges of Private Town Planning Practice

According to the respondents' perception, there are challenges in private town planning practice in Rivers State. Respondents agreed that the existential challenges facing town planning in Nigeria also affect private town planning practice in Rivers State because private practice is a reflection of the entire planning system in the country, although some states are doing better than others. To further buttress this fact, the respondents attested that political interference, poor implementation of master plans, insufficient and poor quality of data, lack of inter-agency collaboration, shortage of manpower, poor planning enlightenment, unethical behaviour of some town planners, lack of public participation in planning, obsolete planning law and regulations, lack of adequate public and private sector collaboration and poor mentorship are the challenges facing town planning practice. Concurrently, these challenges have significantly affected private practice in the planning profession, leading to low patronage of the services of private practitioners. The poor planning environment encourages incoherence in the ordering of development, particularly regarding land use, and clients underpricing planning services, flagrantly ignoring the scale of fees of professional practice. The entire system is worsened by undue political interference, causing general apathy for town planning and private consultancy in Rivers State. The state of planning in Rivers State is abysmal and has been so for two decades.

Number of Registered Town Planners and Town Planning Firms in Rivers State.

The data collected from the TOPREC register and Rivers State Chapter identified 94 Town Planners in Rivers State. These Town planners are registered under the Town Planners Registration Council of Nigeria enabling law and regulation. However, data from NITP Rivers State Chapter identified 22 town planning firms operating in Rivers State whereas, only 12 of the firms are recognized and registered with TOPREC. The implication is that 10 town planning firms are practicing in breach of the extant code of conduct for professional practice in Rivers State. Moreover, the ratio of town planners to the population in Nigeria is about 1: 30,000 population as against the acceptable standard of 1:3000. Presently with barely 94 qualified town planners in Rivers State and a population of about 6 million, the ratio of town planners to the population is about 1: 60,000. This implies that the Rivers State ratio of town planners to the population is extremely outrageous and an indication that proves the poor planning environment in Rivers State.

Potentials and Viability of Private Town Planning Practice

Viability is a measure of the likely success of a particular action or set of actions. Town planning brings about positive impacts in human settlements and also answers to good governance. The data in the study indicated that private town planning practice promotes the advancement of town planning in Nigeria and fills the lacuna that the public sector cannot handle. The kind of jobs that the private practitioners do are of immense benefit to society. They render professional services to clients such as the design of layout plans, procurement of planning permits, legal representation, preparation of town planning technical reports (EIS & SARP), advocacy, transport planning, planning advisory services, socio-economic surveys and other forms of consultancy services.

Private practice offers employment opportunities to more than 50% of the town planners in Rivers State. Those not employed in the public sector find solace in private practice to earn income. The data obtained from the firms show that although the income generated monthly may not be huge for some private practitioners, others are doing well with private practice and can pay staff, rent a well-established office space, and sustain the practice. The study revealed that the potential of private town planning practice is enormous. This is attributed to the fact that town planning is emerging with several opportunities that can be harnessed to benefit private practitioners if the planning environment is fixed and made to work.

However, issues of low patronage, underpricing of planning jobs, and political interference require urgent attention. Collaboration between the private and public sectors needs to be encouraged as the bedrock of a viable planning practice. Non-planners should be stopped from doing planning jobs. Ayinde (2021) notes that the reality about physical planning is that we either plan or perish. The renowned philosopher, Socrates (470 B.C. - 399 B.C.) had said, "By far the greatest and most admirable form of wisdom is that needed to plan and beautify cities and human communities". If as far back as when Socrates lived, he had understood the wisdom and importance of planning human settlements through physical planning, we would be working against wisdom to do otherwise. It is the responsibility of governments all over the world to plan with the private sector playing major roles.

The private practicing planner has leverage to execute his responsibilities without obstruction or interference, they have financial benefits as they engage in third-party consultancy services for developers and the government. They are closer to the people and can be a veritable link to inculcate the principles and concepts of town planning in the minds of the general public, thereby leading to organized human settlement development (Nwokaeze, Ikiriko & Johnbull 2024)

CONCLUSION :

Urban planning is a noble profession that requires collaboration of the planning professionals in both the private and public sector and cooperation of the members of the public as critical stakeholders and the government (at the federal, state, and local levels) for meaningful development to take place in our societies and for town planning profession to be a landmark in the built environment.

Planning professionals and their associations provide technical assistance for preparing and implementing different types of plans and support the collection, analysis, use, sharing and dissemination of spatial data. The planner carries out training and applied research associated with implementing plans, learns from practical experience and provides substantive feedback to decision-makers. Another vital aspect of what planners do is the formulation and documentation of planning models, which could be used for educational purposes, awareness-raising and the mobilization of the public. The planner also engages with civil society organizations to reach out to the people whose awareness needs to be raised, so they can key into the broad goals and objectives of government that support preparation and implementation of physical development plans to secure sustainable settlements.

For the private planning practitioners to experience rapid recognition and growth, it is pertinent for the members of the sector to maintain a high level of professionalism, trust, integrity and honesty in handling any planning project, irrespective of the size. Many urban problems are created by the selfish interests of the public and sometimes by the political class with the support of the professionals. Political influence in planning decisions is a major impediment to ideal developments in Nigeria, as most plans are not implemented but end up on shelves, while implemented plans are subjected to political interests in planning decisions. However, under the effective rule of law and good governance, physical planning is meant to take adequate control of the future growth by plan preparation and administration as well as development control rooted in public interest. This will necessitate proper planning and make our settlements healthy for living, work and play.

The private sector professionals have key roles to play in mitigating the perturbing underlying issues in the system. This study has identified various planning practice and opportunities that the private practitioner can viably engage in, such as land development, layout and site plans, landscape planning and development, recreational planning and development, transportation and traffic planning, site analysis and environmental impact assessments, Geographic information system (GIS) services, advocacy services and planning research and development. Nevertheless, the private practice opportunity areas are not limited to what have been identified in this study. The fact is that there are no limits to what a qualified planner can do to solve the preponderance of human and environmental interrelated problems in our society. With proper training and skill set on the available contemporary technological tools, a registered Town Planner in private practice would be a problem solver, an entrepreneur and a forecaster of the future of human settlements.

RECOMMENDATIONS :

1. For effectiveness of the planning system in Nigeria, the Government needs to put in place policies that encourage planners to engage in private practice and consultancy. This will close the gap between the private and public sector, and create employment opportunities for the rising number of Urban and Regional Planning graduates in Nigeria yearly. It will also reduce the ratio of planners to the population in Nigeria.
2. The Town Planners Registration Council of Nigeria (TOPREC) and the Association of Town Planning Consultants of Nigeria (ATOPCON) should make the registration process for enrollment of town planners and town planning firms less cumbersome.
3. More public enlightenment should be done to educate the populace on the role of Town Planning in human settlement development and the contribution of the private sector planner in bridging the gap between the government and civil society.
4. Planning associations should ensure compliance with the scale of fees for professional jobs and services. If the physical planning sector is lucrative and its value to the society is made more visible, it will attract more industry players and reverse the trend of low patronage at all levels.

REFERENCES :

1. Abubakar, M.O (2022). Improving professional planning practice through effective planning education in Nigeria. Annual lecture series, June 2022. Yaba College of Technology, Yaba, Lagos.
2. Akue, L. (2020). Basic elements of urban and regional planning. Stenkepa computers, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.
3. Alterman, R. (1992). A transatlantic view of planning education and professional practice. Journal of planning education and research. Vol. 12, 102-117.
4. Ayinde, O. (2021). We Have Been Joking; Now is the Time to Plan. Nigerian Institute of Town Planners, Unpublished press conference. Abuja, Nigeria.
5. Chong, D. (2009). Arts management. Routledge.
6. Daramola O. (2021). A comprehensive handbook on Urban and regional planning in Nigeria. Ahmadu Bello University Press Ltd.
7. Datta, T. K. (2010). Seismic analysis of structures. John Wiley & Sons.
8. Ejumudo, K. B. O. (2008). Sustainable development in Nigeria: The policy gap and action dilemma.
9. Faludi, A. (1973). The systems view and planning theory. Socio-Economic Planning Sciences, 7(1), 67-77.

10. Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (1988). Town Planners Registration Council of Nigeria (TOPREC) Decree No. 3 of 1988 known as CAP. 431 LFN 1990 and amended as CAP 171 LFN 2004, Federal Ministry of Information, Lagos.
11. Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (1992). The Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law. Decree No. 88 of 1992, now CAP. N138 LFN 2004. Federal Government press, Lagos.
12. Getz, D., & Petersen, T. (2005). Growth and profit-oriented entrepreneurship among family business owners in the tourism and hospitality industry. *International journal of hospitality management*, 24(2), 219-242.
13. Gwani, J. (1988). The future of physical planning education in Nigeria. *Journal of the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners (JNITP)* Vol. X, 88-96.
14. Hall, P. (1974). The containment of urban England. *Geographical Journal*, 386-408.
15. Julius, O. (2022). Improving professional planning practice through effective planning education in Nigeria; Annual Lecture Series, 16th June 2022.
16. Koontz, T. M. (2006). Collaboration for sustainability? A framework for analyzing government impacts in collaborative-environmental management. *Sustainability: Science, Practice and Policy*, 2(1), 15-24.
17. Nigerian Institute of Town Planners (NITP) (1993). *An Information Handbook*. Concept publications Ltd., Lagos.
18. Nwokaeze, E.C. (2025). Career opportunities in urban and regional planning practice in Nigeria. *World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews*. Vol. 25 (3), 257-267.
19. Nwokaeze, E.C., Ikiriko, T. D. & Johnbull, S. W. (2024). Ethical issues in town planning decisions: Lessons from the Rivers State Government judicial commission of inquiry on the Woji Street building collapse. 55th NITP International Conference Enugu: Nigerian Institute of Town Planners (NITP).
20. Nwokaeze, E.C., & Nwokaeze, L.U. (2024). Challenges and problems of enforcing the Rivers State planning law and regulations in Port Harcourt metropolitan area. 55th NITP International Conference Enugu: Nigerian Institute of Town Planners (NITP).
21. Olanrewaju, S.O. (2019). Planning: Town planning perspectives, *Academic journal of geography and regional planning*. Vol 12(4). 2070-1845.
22. Olujimi, J.A.B. (1999). Education for Town planners in Nigeria: The Role of Town Planners Registration Council of Nigeria (TOPREC). *Journal of the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners (JNITP)*, Vol XII. 15-80.
23. Oyesiku, K. (1998). *Modern urban and regional planning law and administration in Nigeria*. Kraft Books Limited.
24. Tashakkori, A., & Creswell, J. W. (2007). Exploring the nature of research questions in mixed methods research. *Journal of mixed methods research*, 1(3). 207-211.