

THE IMPACT OF BUILDING USE CONVERSION ON RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION IN CALABAR, CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract: This study examined the conversion of use of residential buildings and its implications in Calabar Metropolis. Conversion of use of residential buildings to commercial and other uses has increased in Calabar since 1999 in areas which predominantly have been used for residential purposes. Specifically, the study assessed the impact of building use conversion on residential accommodation between 1999 and 2014 in Calabar and investigated the variation in residential building use conversion across the housing districts in Calabar. The research selected ten residential districts at random in Calabar. Each district was considered as a stratum from which a random sample of streets was taken and the systematic method used to select target members in each street. A sample size of 400 houses was taken. One hypothesis was formulated for testing. The result established that there is a significant difference in the percentage of residential buildings which have been converted to other uses in Calabar Metropolis between 1999 and 2014. The research showed that residential building use conversion impacted negatively on the housing stock in the city as the percentage of buildings originally used for residential purpose declined from 71 percent in 1999 to 49 percent in 2014. The conversions, it was ascertained, were done largely without approval from planning authorities. It is therefore recommended that appropriate control measures be adopted by the planning authorities to stem the rate of illegal conversion of residential buildings to commercial use without necessarily jeopardizing the economic growth of the city.

Keywords: Building use, conversion, Residential, Housing stock, Commercial.

INTRODUCTION

Rapid urbanization in the developing world coupled with recession-ridden economies has resulted in severe urban unemployment and poverty. This situation is compounded by poor socio-economic development programmes in towns and cities. Urban residents have therefore resorted to informal businesses which, thrive in their thousands in the cities of less developed countries, transforming them into beehives of miniscule enterprises (UNDP, 1996, Aluko, 2010). All these businesses are pitched in stiff competition with residential uses for dwindling space in the cities. In Nigeria, evidence abounds in major cities of the conversion of buildings in housing areas to commercial use (Onyebueke, 2000; Jinadu, 2005; Sule, 2008).

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Housing has over the years been a major area of interest to government agencies, researchers and individuals. This is because shelter is universally accepted as the second most important essential human need after food (Nigeria, 2006). The housing problem, according to Ward (1976) will never go away. It existed from ancient times where man's preoccupation was provision of shelter for him and it is still a major component in our daily lives (Bourne, 1981; Mbina, 2007). Housing, however, is more than mere shelter. It embraces all the social services and utilities that go to make a community or neighbourhood a livable environment (Nigeria, 1991). Housing is a basic human need which provides spaces for work, sleep, recreation as well as other social requirements (Jinadu, 2007). The United Nations Organization (UN-Habitat, 2003) defines housing as the residential neighbourhood, micro-district or physical structures that man uses for shelter and the environment of the structure, including all necessary facilities, equipment and devices needed for the physical health and of the social well-being of the family and individual. Housing may, therefore, be considered to be a process of providing housing units for people to live in, with regard to the immediate community, physical setting and facilities. Thus, housing should be in a planned environment with provision for infrastructure and social facilities (Ogu, 2010).

Urban centers generally provide the spatial context for the provision of the housing needs of the people (Jinadu, 2005). Thus, residential units in almost all cities in the world form the major elements of the urban landscape. Residential land use is the largest consumer of urban space (Bourne, 1981; Ayeni, 2001; Shaw, 2004). Cities have a greater concentration of people than villages and have over the years, been the areas of attention in terms of housing provision. This is not unexpected as the population of urban centres have for long been increasing astronomically (UN-Habitat, 2003).

The implication of this phenomenal growth is that the rate of growth of the housing stock must be high enough to meet the housing need of this rising population. Unfortunately, this has not been the case. Population has continued to outgrow housing supply. As reflected in the Nigerian National Report to Habitat II Conference held in Istanbul in June, 1996, there is a high deficit in the housing stock resulting in homelessness of most Nigerians. By 2006, the Federal Ministry of Housing and Urban Development estimated that about 78 million Nigerians lacked adequate housing and that between 12 – 17 million housing units would be required to meet the demand (Nigeria, 2006; Adejumo, 2008). The Federal Government of Nigeria in 1996 noted that about one million housing units were required yearly for the next ten years to clear the deficit and provide sufficient housing for Nigerians. In spite of Federal

and State Government efforts, through housing policies and programmes, to reduce the deficit in housing, over 60 per cent of Nigerians were still considered to be homeless as at 1999 (Nigeria, 2006; Olotuah & Ajenifujah, 2009). The problem of homelessness, as observed in the Nigerian housing policy of 2006 is more in the urban centres than rural areas. One of the factors responsible for this situation is the nature of physical development of housing which includes building and rebuilding activities and conversion of use of buildings especially in old areas of the towns in the developing world. Building use conversion is the change in the use of a building from the purpose for which it was originally used or intended to be used.

Change of use of buildings from residential to other uses has increased in Calabar in recent years in areas which predominantly have been used for residential purposes. These residential areas have over the years maintained the housing stock, providing the residential needs of the people, especially those in the low income group. Residential buildings of varying types adorn these areas and accommodate not only the indigenous population but also immigrants from other towns and villages. The buildings are gradually being converted to commercial and light industrial uses wholly or partially. The houses are now used for shops, stores, restaurants, tailoring workshops, watch repairing and so on. In most of these streets, the frontal rooms of buildings are converted and in some cases extensions made, converting valuable residential spaces to commercial use.

The aim of this paper is to assess the impact of building use conversion on residential accommodation between 1999 and 2014 in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State, Nigeria.

To help achieve this objective the following hypothesis will be tested:

There is a significant difference in the percentage of residential buildings which have been converted to other uses in Calabar Metropolis between 1999 and 2014.

Study Area

Calabar metropolis is the study area. It is the Capital city of Cross River state and comprises two Local Government Areas namely, Calabar South and Calabar Municipality. The city is located on Longitudes $8^{\circ} 18'$ and $8^{\circ} 25'$ E and Latitudes $4^{\circ}50'$ N and $5^{\circ}67'$ N (fig. 1). It is bounded to the North by Odukpani Local Government Area, to the south by Bakassi LGA, to the east by Akpabuyo Local Government Area and to the south-west by the Atlantic Ocean. Calabar metropolis is located in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria, in the South-South geopolitical zone of the country. The city is bounded by the Kwa River to the East, the Calabar River to the West and the mangrove swamps to the South. These rivers act as constraints to the eastward and westward expansion of the city, while the swamps impede the southward

expansion (figure 2). The construction of new housing units at the moment takes place in the northward direction of the city, towards Odukpani Local Government Area where land is still available. It is expected that with improvement in technology, reclamation of the swamps will be done to provide suitable alternative building sites to the south of the city as is done in other riverine cities such as Portharcourt and Yenogoa also in the South- South geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

The ancient city of Calabar has a long history and a fascinating heritage. Nearly after a century of contact with European sailors, Calabar gained recognition as an International Sea Port in the 16th century. From 17th to 19th century, Calabar became a major slave trade port in West Africa. Calabar accounted for approximately 30 percent of Africans carted away to the new world (America) as slaves from Africa. This represented the largest exit of slaves from a single point in Africa.

The population of Calabar has been rising steadily over the years. In the 1963 census the population was 99,350. By the census figures of 1991 the population of Calabar had astronomically risen to 328,876. The census figures of 2006 put the population of Calabar at 371,022. By the National Population Commission projections the current population of Calabar is over 500,000. The growing population of Calabar is manifested in the high housing density and increased formal and informal commercial activities especially in the core areas of the city.

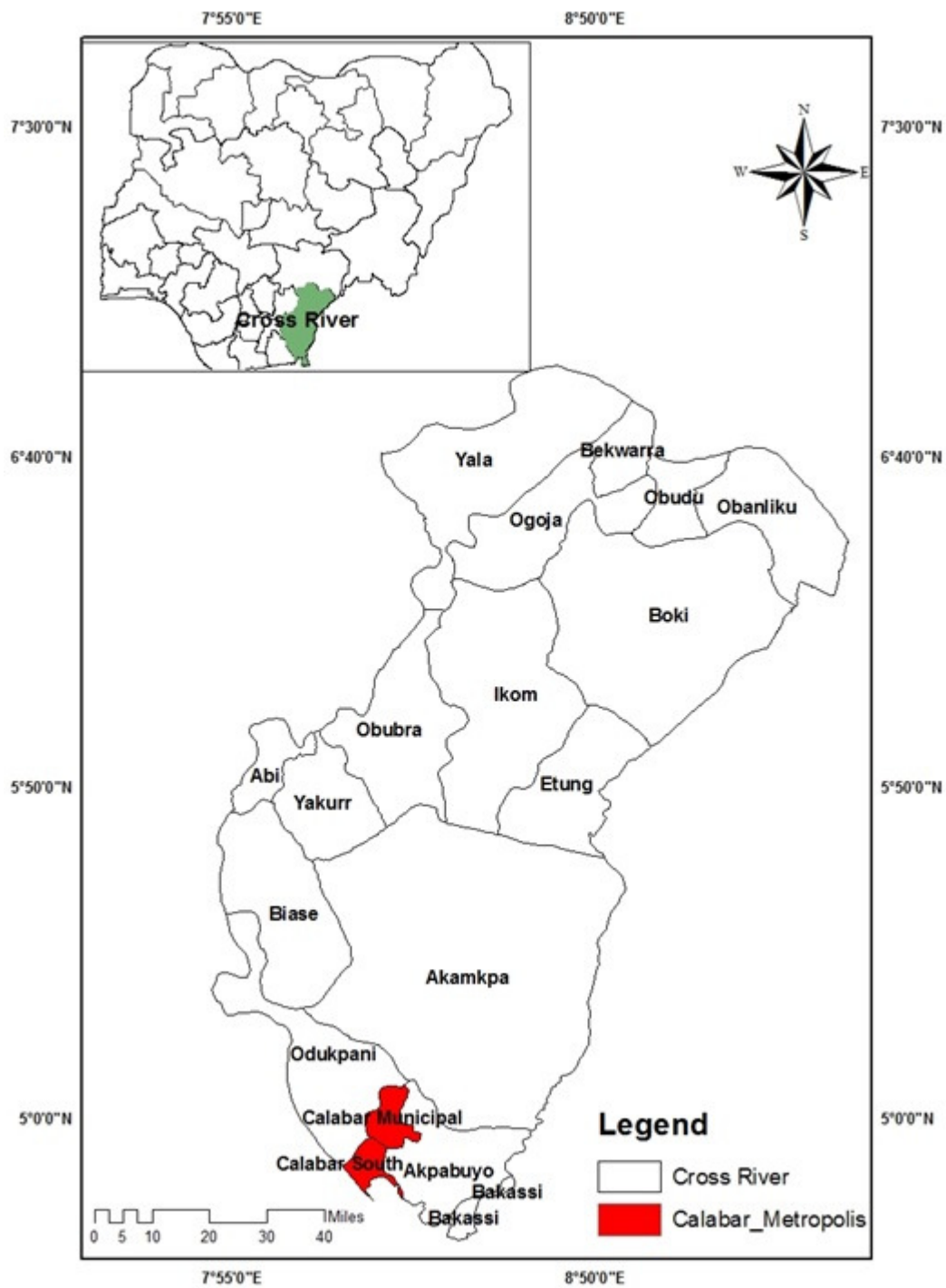


Fig 1: Cross River State showing Calabar metropolis. Insert: Nigeria showing Cross River State.

Source: GIS Lab, Geography and Environmental Science, University of Calabar.

Literature Review

The conversion of use of buildings in cities of the developing world is often from residential to commercial with the latter having serious impacts or diseconomies on the adjacent

residences and their occupants. The extent of the diseconomies, either in terms of effect on price or in terms of geographic reach, has been questioned by many authors in the developed world. An attempt is made here to review the literature on these impacts in cities of developed and developing countries.

Actors in the building sector generally have divergent views about the influence of commercial or non-residential property located within or adjacent to residential areas. For example, it is generally accepted that the value of a new residential property is lower when it is adjacent to commercially (as opposed to residentially) zoned land and/or developments (Hosch & Koehlinger, 1997). In their study in Tucson, Arizona, Cao and Cory (1981) assert that the effect of nearby non-residential uses on residential property values is a priori indeterminate. That outcomes depend on the relative strength of positive and negative external effects generated in any given setting. In this case, the setting is the proportion of non-residential to residential uses in a neighbourhood. According to them optimal mixes of land-use activities are possible and should be sought. They concluded that separation of activities, as is common with contemporary zoning practices, is not optimal. Their findings corroborate arguments for the integration of land uses as an important part of new urban planning.

On the contrary, Ademola (2010) opined that conversion of residential properties to commercial uses or introduction of commercial uses in residential areas has brought about more negative than positive effects on adjacent residential areas. These negative effects include, housing shortage where tenants in Surelere, Lagos, his study area, have to move out because property owners want to sell or lease to commercial owners at exorbitant prices. It is, according to him, almost impossible for new migrants to secure residential accommodation in the area. Another negative externality, Ademola noticed, is the high level of traffic congestion due to an increase in the level of commercial activities. Both customers and shop owners park on the streets, thereby narrowing the carriage ways, and causing traffic hold-up along the roads. Other negative effects include, strain on existing infrastructure such as electricity and water supply, and pollution from high garbage generation and fumes and smells from generators and food joints (Ademola, 2010). His conclusion therefore is that though the changes promote economic activities but their side effects such as high rent, invasion of privacy, and so on, outweigh the benefits to the neighbourhoods.

The specific impact of conversion of use of residential buildings to commercial uses on existing residential accommodation in cities of the developing countries has been studied by a

number of researchers. In Minna, Nigeria, Jinadu (2005), observed that there is a gradual taking over of existing residential properties by commercial land uses which invariably has several implications for the survival of the housing stock. One of the major areas of negative impact is the reduction in the number of room accommodation in the city. He noted three dimensions of accommodation shortages that portrayed the impact of the use conversion and building replacement in the area of study. These include; the phenomenon of “shop/room use” in which shops that were used for commercial purposes in the daytime are also used as sleeping rooms at night; second is the overcrowding in buildings due to high occupancy ratios where cases of 4-7 persons per room were recorded. The low income dwellers of central Minna, most especially the new households, largely migrate due to space inadequacy and shortage of accommodation.

Such dislocations were also observed by Agukoronye and Nwankwo (2002) and Mba (2005). They observed that conversion has forced low-income earners to relocate and set-up squatter settlements inside or outside the urban areas. The movement, unlike the situation in advanced countries (Johnson, 1966), is involuntary. The migrants are compelled by circumstances to move. Jinadu also observed that the demolition and replacement of residential buildings results in the gradual destruction of the city’s cultural heritage. This observation was also made by Dung-gwom and Mamman (2005). In the same vein, Aluko (2003) opined that the conversion of residential buildings to commercial uses has seriously aggravated the housing shortage, resulting in overcrowding, high rent, slum and squatter settlements. In Enugu, Nwachuckwu and Ukpabi (2009) in their study observed that the rate of housing conversion differs significantly with the rate of housing provision and development. Thus according to them this is an indication that as the rate of housing conversion is increasing, the rate of availability of residential housing is decreasing. Thus the rate of housing conversion is higher than the rate of residential housing development. They concluded that housing conversion has adversely affected the rate of housing development in Enugu. It impacts negatively on housing supply and demand in Enugu Metropolis and depletes the housing stock since adequate provisions were not made to replenish the number of houses that were converted to commercial and other uses.

Method of Study

This study adopted a combination of research designs. In terms of number of contacts with the respondents, the study adopted the cross sectional design where data were obtained from respondents at one contact. However, some questions of the research instrument sought to

obtain information over a two-timed period, hence the use of the before-and –after design. Invariably, the study adopted the retrospective-prospective design in terms of period of study.

Procedure for data collection

In order to obtain a general impression of the study area, a reconnaissance survey was conducted. This was followed by actual collection of data in the field. In this research, the residential districts in Calabar were considered as the strata for the study. A total of 10 districts which is 58 percent of all the identified districts in Calabar were randomly selected except the central area which was purposely selected to enable a comparison with other districts. This gave a fair representation of the entire city. Within each stratum a random sample of streets was taken. For each sampled street, the systematic method was used in selecting target members which involved taking every n^{th} house. The population of this study was made up of the total housing stock (51,966) in 10 identified districts in Calabar Metropolis. The minimum sample size was determined using the Taro Yamene formula. This yielded a minimum sample size of 397 for the study. However, 400 copies of questionnaire that were distributed for the study were received. The sample was proportionally distributed among the residential districts based on their housing stock as presented by the Ministry of Lands and Housing. Figure 2 shows the location of the sampled districts in Calabar Metropolis.

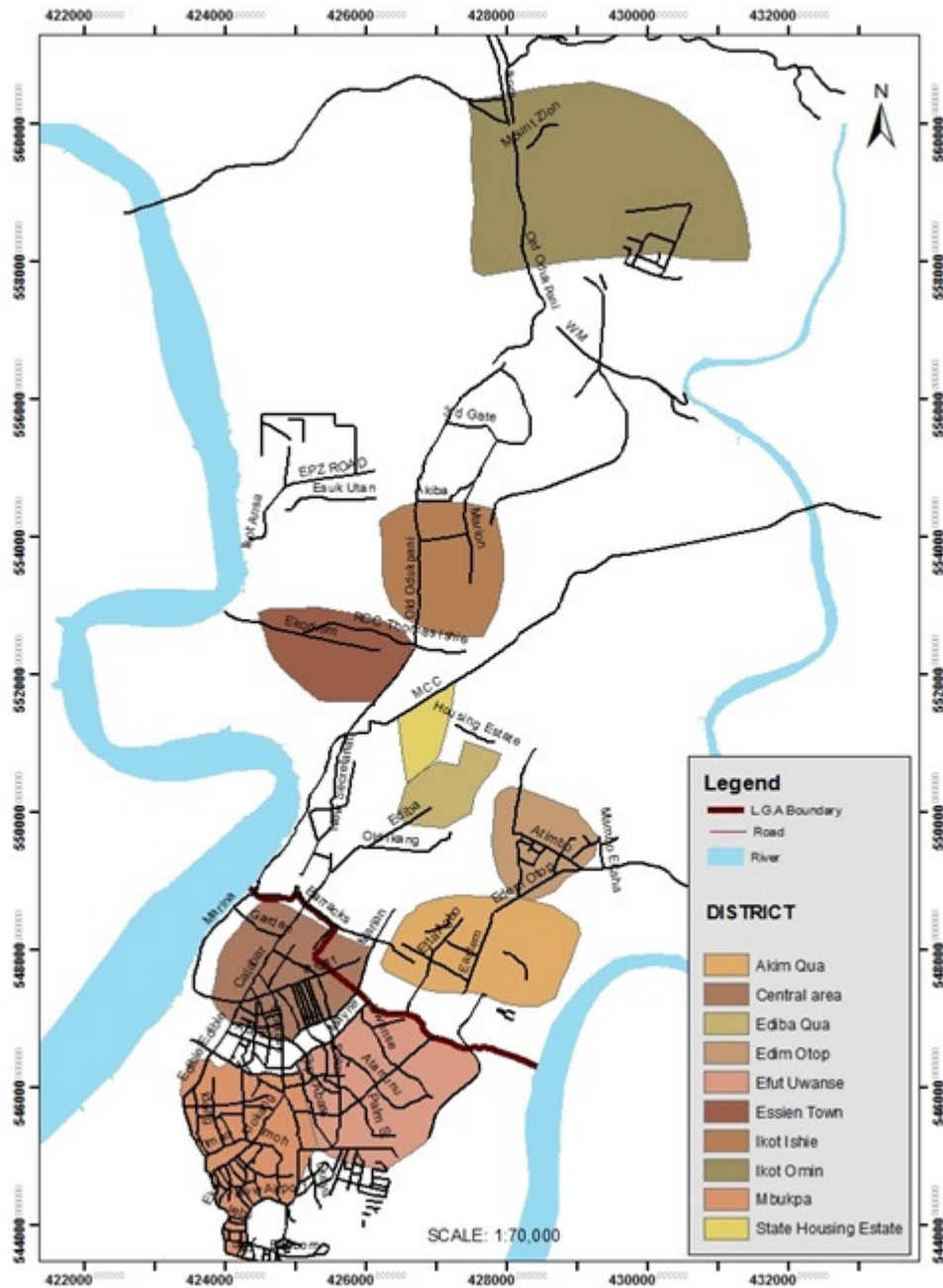


Fig. 2: Sampled Residential Districts in Calabar

Data Presentation

Previous use of property

Data on previous use of property is found in Table 1. Information on the situation in 1999 was obtained from the questionnaire which targeted the owner occupiers. This was to ensure that they were conversant with the situation before and after that year. Generally, most property as at 1999, were used for residential purpose (71.3 per cent). This is spread as follows: Central area 69.4 percent, Ikot Omin 84 percent, Ikot Ishie, 82 percent, Ediba Qua 75 percent, Akim

Qua 78 percent and Mbukpa 88.6 percent. Building use for commercial and other uses was relatively low. However, in the central area over 30 percent of the buildings were used for commercial purpose. This is due to the influence of the Watt market and the adjoining businesses which constitute the business district in Calabar. Thus some structures in the area were erected purposely for commercial use

Present use of property

Table 2 shows data on the present use of property (buildings) across the various residential districts. Generally, Table 2 reveals that 49.3 per cent of the buildings are used for residential purpose, 32.2 per cent are for commercial purposes and 5.5 per cent are for public uses. Also, 3.0 per cent of the buildings are used for industrial purposes while 10 percent are for other uses, including mixed purposes where the buildings are used partially for residential and commercial outfits. Similarly, the use of buildings varies across the 10 housing districts. When compared with the previous use (Table 1) it is observed that residential use of buildings has reduced from 71.3 percent to 49.3 percent indicating that many buildings previously used for living purposes have been converted to commercial and other uses partially or wholly. (See Plate 1)

Table 1: Previous use of property across districts (1999)

Previous use of property	District										Total
	Central area	Ikot Omin	State Housing Estate	Ikot Ishie	EfutUw anse	Essien Town	Ediba Qua	Akim Qua	Mbukpa	EdimOto p	
Residential % within District	43 69.4%	37 84.1%	16 53.3%	34 82.9%	20 44.4%	12 38.7%	22 75.9%	39 78.0%	39 88.6%	23 95.8%	285 71.3%
Commercial % within District	17 27.4%	5 11.4%	2 6.7%	7 17.1%	8 17.8%	9 29.0%	7 24.1%	8 16.0%	3 6.8%	1 4.2%	67 16.7%
Industrial % within District	1 1.6%	2 4.5%	1 3.3%	0 0.0%	6 13.3%	2 6.45%	0 0.0%	1 2.0%	1 2.3%	0 0.0%	14 3.5%
Public	0	0	5	0	6	3	0	1	1	0	16

% within District	0.0%	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	13.3%	9.7%	0.0%	2.0%	2.3%	0.0%	4.0%
Others	1	0	6	0	5	5	0	1	0	0	18
% within District	1.6%	0.0%	20%	0.0%	11.1%	16.13%	0.0%	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.5%
Total	62	44	30	41	45	31	29	50	44	24	400
% within District	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2014

Table 2: Present Use of property across districts (2014)

Use of Property	District										Total
	Central area	Ikot Omin	State Housing Estate	Ikot Ishie	Efut Uwase	Essien Town	Ediba Qua	Akim Qua	Mbukpa	Edim Otop	
Residential	21 33.9%	31 70.5%	14 46.66%	23 56.1%	16 35.6%	5 16.13%	20 68.97%	22 44.0%	28 63.34%	17 70.8%	197 49.3%
Commercial	34 54.8%	9 20.5%	3 10.0%	13 31.7%	10 22.2%	11 35.5%	9 31.0%	20 40.0%	15 34.1%	5 20.9%	129 32.2%
Industrial	1 1.6%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	7 15.6%	4 12.9%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	12 3.0%
Public	0 0.0%	2 4.5%	6 20.0%	0 0.0%	7 15.6%	5 16.13%	0 0.0%	1 2.0%	1 2.3%	0 0.0%	22 5.5%
Others	6 9.7%	2 4.5%	7 23.3%	5 12.2%	5 11.1%	6 19.35%	0 0.0%	7 14.0%	0 0.0%	2 8.3%	40 10.0%
Total	62 100.0%	44 100.0%	30 100.0%	41 100.0%	45 100.0%	31 100.0%	29 100.0%	50 100.0%	44 100.0%	24 100.0%	400 100.0%

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2014



Plate 1: Buildings partially converted from residential to commercial use in Bedwell street, Central District, Calabar. October, 2014

Table 3 shows the overall change of use of residential buildings across the districts from 1999 to 2014. The data is obtained from tables 1 and 2. It is observed that the highest percentage of change was in the central area of Calabar (35.5 percent), followed by Akim Qua Town (34 percent). Other districts such as Ikot Ishie (26.8), Mbukpa (25.2) show significant percentage conversions of residential use of buildings within the period. In terms of the positive or negative impact on the housing stock, it is observed that the change in all the districts was negative, that is no district showed an increase in the residential housing stock since 1999. Thus there was generally a reduction in the percentage of building units used for residential purpose in the districts. Fig. 9 graphically shows the percentage conversion of use across the various districts in Calabar.

Table 3: Conversion of use of residential buildings in Calabar Metropolis in 1999 and 2014.

District	Residential buildings (1999)		Residential buildings (2014)		Change (Positive + or negative -)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency (+ve or -ve)	%
Central Area	43	69.4	21	33.90	22 (-ve)	35.50
Ikot Omin	37	84.1	31	70.45	6 (-ve)	13.65
State Housing Estate	16	53.3	14	46.66	2 (-ve)	6.64
Ikot Ishie	34	82.9	23	56.10	11 (-ve)	26.80
EfutUwanse	20	44.4	16	35.60	4 (-ve)	8.80
Essien Town	12	38.7	5	16.13	7 (-ve)	22.4
Ediba Qua Town	22	75.9	20	68.97	2 (-ve)	6.93
Akim Qua Town	39	78.0	22	44.00	17 (-ve)	34.00
Mbukpa	39	88.6	28	63.34	11 (-ve)	25.20
EdimOtop	23	95.8	17	70.83	6 (-ve)	24.97

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2014

Test of Hypothesis

H_0 : There is no significant difference in the percentage of residential buildings which have been converted to other uses in Calabar Metropolis between 1999 to 2014.

H_1 : There is a significant difference in the percentage of residential buildings which have been converted to other uses in Calabar Metropolis between 1999 to 2014.

Data for the testing of this hypothesis are found in Table 3. The results of the paired sample Student t-test are presented in Tables 4a and 4b. Table 4a shows the descriptive statistics with the mean of 1999 sample being 71.11 and that of 2014 being 50.60. There is certainly a difference (20.51) in the mean between the two samples. However, it is not clear whether the difference is significant. From table 4b, it is observed that $t (d.f. = 9) = 5.994$, $p < 0.001$. Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis is rejected. It is therefore concluded that there is a significant difference in the mean of percentage of residential buildings which have been converted to other uses in Calabar Metropolis from 1999 to 2014.

Table 4 a: Paired samples descriptive statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	1999	71.1100	10	19.37240	6.12609
	2014	50.5980	10	18.51259	5.85420

Researcher's Statistical calculations, 2014

Table 4 b: Paired samples t-test

	Paired Differences					T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 1999 2014	-20.51200	10.82137	3.42202	12.77086	28.25314	5.994	9	.000

Researcher's Statistical calculations, 2014.

Discussion of Findings

The conversion of use of buildings has negatively impacted on availability of residential accommodation. From the responses obtained during questionnaire administration, most houses prior to 1999 were used for the purpose they were built, that is residential (71 percent). Apart from EfutUwanse and Essien town districts that had 44 percent and 39 percent respectively of buildings used for residential purposes, all other districts had over 50 percent of their buildings used for residential purpose (table 1). On the other hand, the number of buildings put for residential use had dropped significantly by 2014 when the field research was conducted. Thus as indicated in table 2, only 49 percent of the buildings were used for purely residential purpose. Other uses especially commercial had increased from a mere 16 percent in 1999 to 32 percent in 2014.

The implication of this situation is that the overall housing stock (buildings available for living) would have reduced appreciably since 1999 owing to the loss occasioned by use conversion of residential buildings. It is observed that 72 percent of current uses started in the last ten years in the study area. Building use conversion by implication must have increased in recent years following establishment of commercial outfits either due to increased unemployment or dwindling household income in Calabar in particular and in Nigeria generally.

Though conversion of use of residential buildings is more in the central area of Calabar which comprises the CBD and adjoining residences as also observed by Sule (1986), the rate of conversion in some other districts is becoming significant. This is due to increasing commercial activities in districts other than the Central Business District (CBD). This situation is closely related to the provisions of the multiple nuclei theory propounded by Harris and Ullman (1945) which recognizes additional growth centres in the city. Thus residential districts such as Akim Qua Town, Mbukpa, IkotIshie and so on are now having

commercial centres which keep expanding and engulfing residential buildings. The implication is that available housing units in these built up districts are reducing thereby displacing residents in the districts.

5.2 Conclusion

This research has established that there is a significant conversion of use of residential units to other uses in Calabar Metropolis. This conversion of use which in some towns is confined to Central Business Districts, is wide spread in Calabar. It was revealed that other residential districts such as Akim Qua Town, Ikot Ishie, Mbukpa and so on which are removed from the Calabar CBD are becoming centres of high and moderate residential building conversion. From the findings of this study, the tempo of residential building conversion has increased since the advent of the current republic in 1999 in Calabar Metropolis. The change of use of buildings in Calabar has significant impact on the existing housing stock as many dwellings are converted to other uses. This is due mainly to invasion of the residential districts by increasing commercial activities such as shops, stores, hair salons and so on.

From the findings of this research, people are motivated by economic and other factors to change the use of buildings from residential to commercial. While embarking on informal business activities within living areas may provide opportunities for the landlords or shop owners to boost their household income, the present *laissez faire* attitude whereby conversion of housing units is done in a disorderly manner without planning permission from the appropriate authority has serious consequences on residential accommodation and the immediate environment of residential districts in Calabar. It is imperative therefore for planners in charge of development control to step up efforts at checking the rate of conversions of residential buildings in Calabar.

5.3 Recommendations

- Government and housing agencies should formulate sound policies and programmes to maintain and increase the housing stock in the urban centres to replace those lost through conversions. These should include:
 - Urban renewal schemes aimed at rehabilitating deteriorating residential properties in the core areas of residential districts.
 - Provision of necessary infrastructure and services, such as good access roads, potable water, electricity and employment schemes in the districts.

- Encouragement of provision of affordable housing units through site and services schemes, cooperative housing schemes and so on.
 - To stem the rate of conversions in all the identified districts, the Local Planning Authorities in Calabar Municipality and Calabar South Local Government Areas should set up monitoring teams to check illegal conversions of residential buildings.
 - To help promote economic and commercial activities without adversely affecting the housing stock, government and private organisations should consider erecting multi-storey buildings divided into single rooms for renting by the small scale business men and women. These buildings could be located in the existing markets in the central business district and other districts in the city.

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