**URBAN TRANSFORMATION IN AKURE, NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF A RENEWAL INITIATIVE**

**Abstract**

*Akure, the capital city of Ondo state, has witnessed a spate of urban transformation and renewal in recent times, especially since 2009, when the administration headed by Dr. Olusegun Mimiko took over the affairs of the state. This study investigates the urban renewal initiative in Ondo State, using Akure as a case study, with the aim of assessing its challenges and prospects in advancing liveable and sustainable urban development in Nigeria.* *Data were collected from 150 residents of the study area where urban renewal took place for questionnaire administration. In-depth interviews were conducted with selected individuals involved in the implementation of the programme. Data analysis employed frequency counts, percentages, and content analysis. The study showed that 75% of the respondents endorsed and supported the urban renewal programmes, while 82% observed that the compensation given to owners of affected properties was not adequate. The study discovered that the absence of a citywide plan, a lack of synergy between the state government, local government, and private sector, a lack of public participation, and a shortage of funds were the challenges of the urban renewal exercise in the study area. Despite these challenges, it was observed that the programme was implemented to improve the living conditions in the study area. It was also recorded that the programme is a veritable tool for creating employment for the teeming population. The study concluded that the programme lacks adequate plans to guide its implementation. The study recommended that a comprehensive citywide master plan should be developed to guide development and integrate housing, infrastructure, transportation, and environmental priorities*

**Keywords:** Challenges, Prospects, Urban Renewal, Transformation, Ondo State, Nigeria

**1.0 Introduction**

Akure, like most cities in Nigeria and other developing countries, has been witnessing massive movements of people from the rural areas and surrounding settlements, particularly since the city became the provincial headquarters of the defunct Ondo province and more particularly when it became the capital city of old Ondo state in 1976. The spate of urbanization and growth experienced by the city resulted in a high concentration of people and activities, which has a direct impact on increasing population and demand for housing and urban infrastructure, including transport, water, among others. It also implies increased use of existing facilities, leading to inadequacies and rapid deterioration of the facilities and services. This has implications for increased provision, supply, and expansion of these facilities as well as upgrading of existing ones that make for good urban living. However, despite this, since the creation of Ondo state in 1976, urban development efforts have remained disjointed and uncoordinated, resulting in rapid decay of infrastructure and epileptic services (Ondo State, 2010). In other words, before 2009, urban renewal in the state had been ad hoc, unorganised, and lacking in speed and tenacity of purpose and action in providing urban facilities and services that make for good urban living and welfare.

International concern has been growing over deteriorating housing conditions in urban areas of developing nations, Central and Eastern Europe (UN, 1996). This issue was highlighted at the United Nations Habitat I Conference held in Vancouver in 1976; during the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless in 1987; and at the Habitat II Conference held in Istanbul in 1996. Urban renewal has become an important strategy/vehicle for providing housing and urban infrastructures in contemporary times in Nigeria. The new Nigerian urban development policy listed urban renewal and slum upgrading as one key issue that requires new initiatives and actions. This is because recent records indicate that although African countries are making progress in the area of environmental sustainability, but will not be able to meet set targets (MDG Report 2012).

To address these and other problems, past governments have been executing different urban renewal programmes and projects, as well as developing infrastructure facilities and transportation development. As indicated earlier, prior to the present initiatives and actions to improve and upgrade urban infrastructure and facilities in Akure, efforts have been made in the past to improve and upgrade housing and urban infrastructure in the city. Following the creation of Ondo State in 1976, Akure, being the state capital, received greater attention. This manifested in the construction of new housing, including staff quarters for government workers in Ala and Alagbaka residential estates, and existing infrastructures were expanded and upgraded. Thus, the main road of Oba Adesida/Oyemekun road was dualized and resurfaced. Since then, other programmes and projects have been undertaken to improve the city, up to 2009 when there was a radical transformation and restructuring of the city's morphology. Consequently, this paper is designed to explore the urban renewal programmes of Mimiko’s administration in his first four years in Ondo State, drawing from the case of Akure, the state capital. The administration was involved in massive urban renewal in the major cities of Ondo state, including Akure, the state capital, and the setting for this study

**2.0 Conceptual Framework and Relevant Literature**

There is a long and growing literature on urban renewal and associated strategies for urban change, transformation, and redevelopment generally and in Nigeria. In simple terms, ‘urban renewal’ describes the cumulative physical redevelopment of existing urban areas (Roberts, 2005; Zhang, Zhang, & Wu, 2021), undertaken to optimise under-utilised sites or precincts. As cities evolve, spatial functions change over time, prompting a cycle of development and, often, redevelopment. When several buildings or sites across a precinct or neighbourhood undergo redevelopment, a wider process of value uplift and ‘gentrification’ is often activated (Newman & Ashton, 2004).

According to Weaver (1970), urban renewal refers to an aggregate of public and private activities which retard or terminate urban obsolescence, prevent decay, clear areas which have bad and upgrade buildings, facilities, and the environment in others that still have some useful life. Wood (1967) defined it as a system of preventing the premature obsolescence of urban neighbourhoods, facilities for the restoration of declining areas, as well as the recreation of worn-out areas. Agbola (1987), on the other hand, defined urban renewal as a relatively comprehensive community redevelopment programme through which a particular city seeks to re-fashion and rebuild the physical structures of a particular segment of the city in order to enable it to cope more successfully with the problems confronting it. To Olawepo (2010), urban renewal could be seen as a process of upgrading the status and structure of a particular section of a settlement, with a view to making it ‘a new’ through modernization. It is a process of replacing the various degrees of old, decayed, and congested buildings and infrastructures, which are characteristic of old cities. The components of urban renewal may include, among others, city expansion and redevelopment, comprehensive road development and redesigning, and beautification and settlement layout (Olawepo, 2010; Cao, Deng, & Song, 2023).

Others include upgrading of facilities and public goods and services, repair, construction, and silting of the drainage system within an urban centre, and enforcing slum upgrading and city development. They include city expansion, city redevelopment, urban rehabilitation and renovation, beautification of monuments and structures, and city conservation, among others.

Anderson (2004) mentions that if the inner stabilization of districts breaks down and produces a marginal and unacceptable situation, the interventions in the built environment by the state become necessary. Properties of urban decline areas are generally physical decay, lack of investments and infrastructure services, dense social problems, and demolished and vacant building blocks. Such insecure areas also create conditions for social problems. There is no doubt that Nigerian cities very often fall into a state of disrepair, and many have been described as unliveable using the world standard.

Aina (1990) gave a concise overview of problems in Urban Nigeria as follows

Urban areas of Nigeria are deprived settlements characterized by excessive residential densities, largely uninhabitable housing, and the absence of sanitation, basic infrastructure, and social services. They harbor migrants from the rural areas who are unable to fit into the economy of the city and so tend to find solace in informal activities and crime The proliferation of these shantytowns results in the unwieldy expansion of the urban centers which poses a major planning problem as provision and management of roads, drainage and sewage systems among other infrastructure proves very difficult.

Adebayo and Jegede, who studied the urban situation in Ado Ekiti, described the appalling state of Nigeria’s urban areas below

The Nigerian urban areas today present a grim litany of woes. Many Nigerian cities are vulnerable to flooding, erosion, and storms. Invariably, natural disasters in cities kill or injure members of low-income groups disproportionately because the poor often live in unsafe housing on vulnerable lands. The loss of homes, possessions, and often livelihood because of a natural disaster often leads to further impoverishment. Motor vehicles and motorcycles also pose a significant environmental threat to urban residents. Reported road traffic accidents in Nigeria between 1990 and 1995 were 121,451; of these figures, 15.66% totaling 19,049 cases, occurred in Lagos, Nigeria’s metropolitan city.

Fatusin and Aribigbola (2013) in their study of housing quality in Akure, Ikare and Okitipupa the major urban centres in Ondo state conducted a survey which revealed that 35% of houses in these cities can be classified as poor using yardsticks such as presence/absence of structural defects, materials used in construction, roofing, privacy, availability of courtyards/court gardens etc. while over 11% are in dilapidated forms. Under these circumstances, it became obvious that if Nigerian cities were to be liveable, the cities would have to be renewed. Many Nigerian states, in response to the need for urban renewal, established partnerships with many bilateral and multilateral development Agencies like the World Bank, Habitat International, and African Development Bank. For instance, forty-two slum communities or “blighted areas” were identified in Lagos metropolis in 1981 by a World Bank Urban Renewal project. The number of slums in the city is estimated to have increased to about 100 due to the inadequacy of private and public institutions to provide housing for the increasing population (Adelekan, 2009; Gbadegesin et al., 2011; Aribigbola, Fatusin, & Oladehinde, 2021; Oladehinde 2025; Oladehinde, Oladeji, Lawal, Adeyemi, & Adetayo, 2024).

Early 20th-century urban renewal projects were undertaken to eradicate spatial concentrations of social disadvantage and poverty, focusing on inner city ‘slums’ (von Hoffman, 2009) and, later, public housing estates**.** The earliest approach to urban renewal is slum clearance, where a whole section of part of a city is completely removed and rebuilt. Slum clearance has been widely criticised for undermining community life and the urban vitality of cities (Mennel 2011). Similarly, public housing estate renewal projects have been criticised for focusing on physical design at the expense of complex social problems (Hanlon, 2010; Crump, 2002). Contemporary urban renewal processes within public housing estates now seek to embed community participation and social sustainability in project design (Wood, Randolph et al. 2002).

By the 1990s, urban renewal had become a key strategy for containing urban growth within existing areas in Australia and many other countries (Burke and Hayward, 1992). By consolidating and intensifying development on well-located, under-utilised sites, it was presumed that the pressure for new development on the urban fringe would be reduced. However, the strategy of urban containment has been much contested since this time, with claims that growth management undermines wider affordability by introducing a supply constraint (Anthony 2006; Landis 2006), while displacing lower-income groups in inner areas as they undergo redevelopment and gentrify (Larsen & Hansen, 2008; Norris & Gkartzios, 2011).

In the United States of America, Urban renewal began with the Housing Act of 1949. The method used was clearance and rebuilding directed by local agencies and supported by large federal subsidies (Levy, 2003). It ended in 1973 and was replaced by the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974. In place of the urban renewal clearance and rebuild approach, Community Development programmes have tended to emphasise preservation and improvement (Levy, 2003). In sum, urban renewal activities in the US have focused largely on de-concentrating poverty in inner city areas, through the redevelopment of public housing estates (Parson, 1982; Hanlon, 2010; Goetz, 2011), as well as increasing development around new public transit facilities as a way of reducing urban sprawl (Kahn, 2007). In the United Kingdom, the focus has been on achieving ambitious targets for new housing development within existing urban areas, necessitating a major emphasis on ‘brownfield’ sites (Whitehead, 2007).

In general, the literature indicates that urban renewals are undertaken through a number of specific approaches such as designating sites/precincts for higher value development potential (as a planning authority), upgrading of transport infrastructure or public facilities (as a public developer and infrastructure provider); taking an active role in site acquisition and assembly (as a public developer) and involvement in overall planning, co-ordination, and delivery (as a hybrid planning and development agency).

The degree of direct government involvement in urban renewal processes varies. In some cases, renewal processes are largely driven by the public sector, using a variety of direct intervention strategies (i.e., in the case of public housing redevelopment, development on public land, or infrastructure investment), while in other contexts, urban renewal processes are fuelled by private sector activity, often with some facilitation via regulatory planning levers.

In Nigeria, two processes or methods of urban renewal have been identified and used in achieving the urban renewal goals. These are the sequential comprehensive (large-scale) slum clearance and the organic planning or Redevelopment Approach (Agbola, 2004). The organic Approach, as advocated by Onibokun in the early 1970s, sought the involvement of the target population in all aspects of the decision-making and decision-implementing strategies.

**3.0 Materials and Methods**

**3.1 Study Area and Methods**

Akure is a traditional Nigerian city, and like other traditional Yoruba towns in the country, it existed long before the advent of British colonial rule in the country. The city is located within Ondo State in the Southwestern part of Nigeria. Ondo State is one of the 36 states of Nigeria. It lies approximately at latitude 70 151 North of the Equator and longitude 50 151 East of the Greenwich Meridian (see Figure 1). Akure is a medium-sized urban centre and became the provincial headquarters of Ondo province in 1939. It also became the capital city of Ondo State and a Local Government headquarters in 1976. Consequently, there was a heterogeneous massing of people and activities in the city (M.W. & H, 1980). The city’s morphology has changed over time to assume its present status with its attendant problems, as experienced in similar medium-sized urban centres in Nigeria. Akure is located approximately 700 kilometres southwest of Abuja, the Federal Capital of Nigeria, and about 300 kilometres from Lagos, the former capital of Nigeria. The increased relative political influence of Akure as a state capital since 1976 has greatly promoted its rapid growth and increased socio-economic activities, resulting in its spatial expansion from an area of about 16 square kilometres in 1980 to about 30 square kilometres in 2000 (Ministry of Works, Lands and Housing, 2000). Presently, it covers about 35 km2 (Ondo State, 2011). The population of the city grew from 38,852 in 1952 to 71,106 in 1963. The 1991 national population census recorded a population of Akure at 239,124, while its present population is about 387,000 (Ondo State, 2010). The World Cities Encyclopaedia puts its current population at 559,940. Besides being the seat of Ondo State government, the city accommodates offices of several Federal Government of Nigeria’s ministries, agencies, and parastatals, including the Federal University of Technology, Akure, among others.

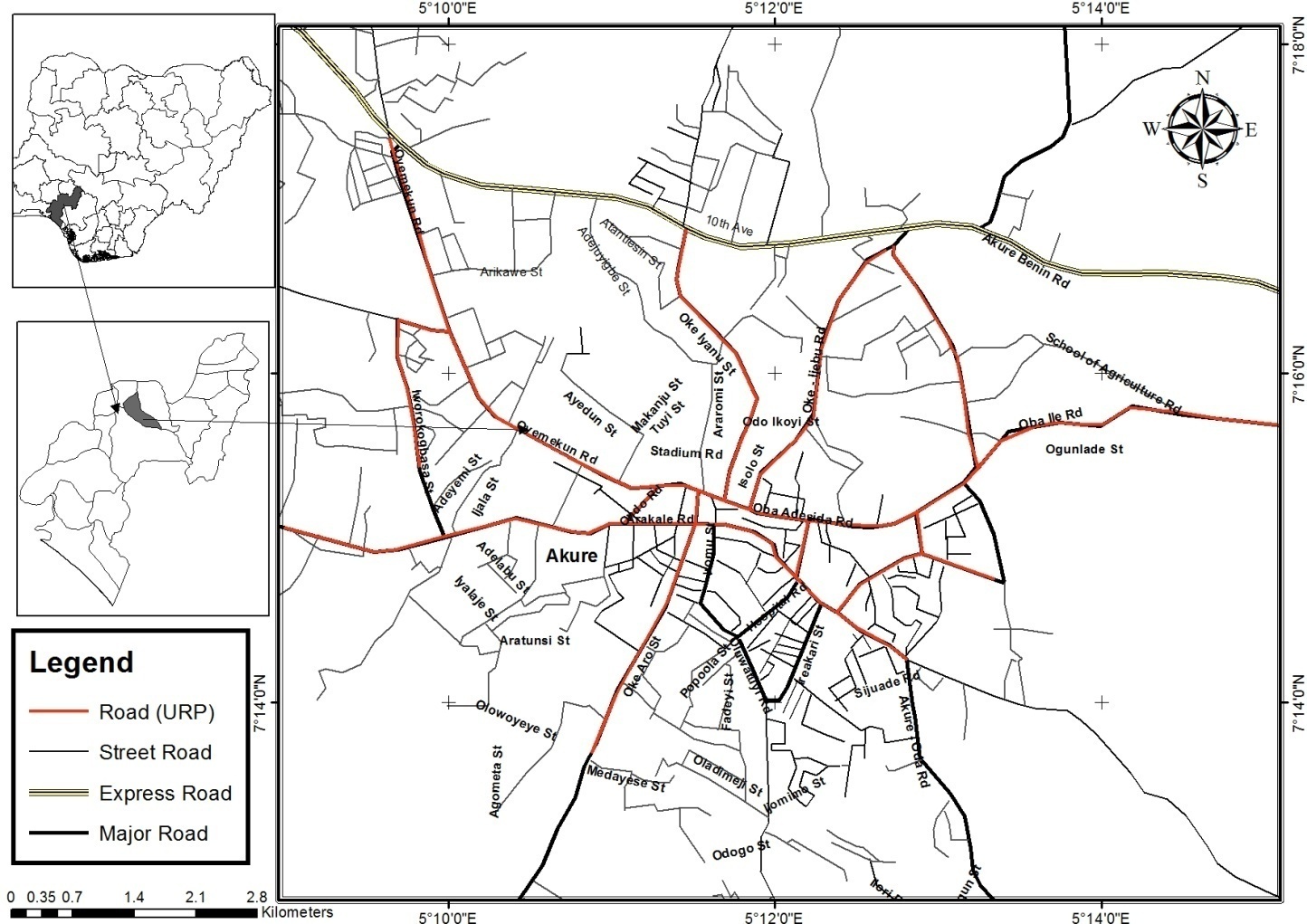
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Figure 1: Map of Nigeria indicating Ondo State and the study area

Source: Adapted from Oyinloye (2013)

The paper draws on a questionnaire, document analysis, qualitative research, as well as in-depth interviews to obtain information on selected residents of the city, agencies, and individuals responsible for carrying out urban renewal in the city. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of the urban renewal initiatives in Akure. Primary quantitative data were obtained through the administration of structured questionnaires to 150 randomly selected residents within areas directly affected by the urban renewal projects. The random selection ensured that each resident in the study area had an equal chance of inclusion, thereby reducing sampling bias. Qualitative data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key government officials from relevant agencies and departments, as well as with selected individuals directly involved in the planning and execution of the renewal activities.

Quantitative data derived from the questionnaires were analysed using descriptive statistical tools, specifically frequency counts and percentages, to examine residents’ perception of Akure on the Urban Renewal Programmes. The qualitative interview data were transcribed and subjected to content analysis, enabling the identification of recurring themes, perspectives, and contextual issues regarding the challenges and renewal of the renewal exercise. This method not only enhanced the validity and reliability of the findings but also allowed for a more nuanced interpretation of the challenges and prospects of the urban renewal initiative in Akure.

**4.0 Results of the Findings**

**4.1 Urban Renewal in Akure**

Before the redevelopment activity in Akure, a number of efforts had been made in the past to provide and upgrade housing and urban infrastructure, and facilities in the city. The first comprehensive attempt followed the choice of the city as the capital of the then-new Ondo State (old Ondo State) in 1976. Thus, to be able to accommodate the influx of people and activities to the city, a number of housing and urban development projects were enunciated and implemented to transform the city and be able to cope with the upsurge of people and activities. These included the dualisation of Oba Adesida/Oyemekun road, creation and development of housing estates such as Ala, Alagbaka, Oba Ile, Ijapo, among others, as well as the provision and development of other urban basic services. In 1994, through the intervention of the World Bank and the Federal Government urban development project, Ondo State was chosen as one of the thirteen pilot states, and Akure was equally chosen. Consequently, two communities in the core area of the city were selected, and projects designed to improve urban facilities and services in them were undertaken in the two communities.

In 2009, the government embarked on vigorous and more impactful urban renewal in the city. Consequently, the following Key urban renewal elements or projects in the city can be identified:

* Rehabilitation/Reconstruction of community markets
* Rehabilitation of roads and construction of stormwater channels
* Provision of potable water
* Eliminating the sale of vehicles along the major arterial roads and other unwholesome locations
* Flood and erosion control
* Improvement in security measures
* Effective waste management
* Beautification and aesthetic enhancement of the urban environment
* Development of garages and parks
* Creation of open spaces, etc.
* Installation of traffic lights and road signs

In the area of rehabilitation and construction of community markets, two of the most important markets in the city, that is, NEPA and Isinkan markets, were completely rebuilt and provided with modern facilities that make for a good business environment. Neighbourhood markets were built in selected neighbourhoods of the city, including Adekunle Ajasin Road and behind the old garage, among others. The impact of these reconstructed and new markets is that it has significantly improved the business environment in the city. Investigation revealed that the majority of the traders and patrons of these markets are quite satisfied because they are no longer exposed to the debilitating effects of the climate elements of rain and scorching sun. Essential facilities are also available to them in the market.

The urban renewal activities of the state government also focus on the reconstruction and expansion of roads. Arakale road, which has dev past efforts of dualisation was redesigned, expanded, and dualized. This was possible because the government, through negotiation and consensus, acquired some properties, and adequate compensation was paid to the owners of the acquired buildings. The Oba Adesida/ Oyemekun road was expanded, and road furniture, including road signs and signals, was provided. Bus stops with covers were equally provided at strategic locations along the roads to beautify, make them more functional with increased capacity. Other major roads that were expanded, dualized, and provided with functional street lights include the Fiwasaiye-Ado Ekiti road and the Ondo roads.

**4.2 Perception of Residents of Akure on the Urban Renewal Programme**

An assessment of the responses of selected residents of Akure on the desirability of the urban renewal programme indicates strong and positive endorsement. A majority of respondents (75%) supported the initiative, 17% opposed it, and 8% remained undecided. This aligns with the observations of Olayiwola, Adeleye, and Ogunshakin (2005), who noted that well-executed urban renewal schemes in Nigerian cities often receive public endorsement when they are perceived to improve infrastructure, enhance accessibility, and promote economic vitality. Among the total participants, 68% considered the programme was far-reaching enough, 23% disagreed, and 9% expressed no opinion. However, 82% felt that the compensation provided to those whose properties were affected was inadequate, only 12% regarded it as sufficient, while 6% were undecided. This dissatisfaction, according to Fatusin and Fagbohunka (2018), Raji and Okafor (2024), and Egbenta and Udoudoh (2018), reflects a recurring challenge in urban renewal across sub-Saharan Africa, where affected property owners frequently receive compensation that does not reflect market value. Inadequate compensation not only undermines public trust but also exacerbates social inequities, thereby threatening the long-term sustainability of renewal efforts.

Furthermore, 72% of the 150 respondents reported having no prior knowledge of the programme and were thus caught unawares, while 13% were informed beforehand and 15% were undecided. The lack of prior public awareness, as observed by most of the respondents, underscores a deficiency in participatory planning, a key principle in sustainable urban development as emphasised by Healey (1997) and the UN-Habitat (2016) New Urban Agenda. On the matter of implementation, 85% believed it should have been carried out by the local government, 7% preferred the state government, and 8% were uncertain. This suggested that residents often associate local authorities with greater accountability and contextual understanding. This finding resonates with the argument of Mabogunje (2011) that decentralised governance structures are often better positioned to manage urban transformation projects in Nigeria due to their proximity to the affected populations. It was observed that 72% of the respondents agreed that the programme brings economic benefits to the community and should be sustained, 17% disagreed, and 11% were unsure. This corroborates the submission of Ebong (2012) that urban renewal initiatives can stimulate commerce, create jobs, and attract investment when infrastructure upgrades are prioritised.

When asked about the most important urban renewal projects in the city, 64% chose road rehabilitation and expansion, 18% selected neighbourhood markets, 8% indicated beautification of roundabouts and open spaces, 5% opted for traffic lights, 3% for street furniture, and 2% for motor parks. The fact that most of the respondents considered the programme far-reaching suggests that, despite its limitations, it succeeded in delivering tangible improvements, particularly in road rehabilitation and expansion, which a high proportion of the respondents identified as the most important intervention. This finding mirrors the work of Roberts and Sykes (2000), who argue that transportation infrastructure upgrades often serve as the most visible and widely appreciated outcomes of urban regeneration projects. Regarding the sustainability of the project, 51% wanted it to continue in its current form, 28% preferred it as a local government initiative, 13% suggested a joint state/local government effort, and 8% were undecided.

**4.3 Challenges of the Renewal Exercise**

The conceptual framework described above indicates that urban renewal is a process that involves articulating goals and plans to guide and direct the activities of redeveloping decaying sections of cities or parts of a city. An examination of the process and urban renewal in Akure revealed a lack of public participation in determining the programmes of the renewal exercise. Besides, there are no renewal plans for the city. Projects and areas to be improved are determined by the government officials without input from the citizenry. In other words, Projects and programmes of the renewal activity are not planned specifically or formulated. Thus, the programmes are designed or determined by government officials and do not necessarily reflect the needs and aspirations of the people. This portends a grave danger in terms of use, maintenance, and safeguarding of renewal projects.

One of the key challenges identified in the course of this study is the lack of a citywide plan to guide and direct the renewal exercise. A review of the process and activity of the urban renewal programmes in Akure revealed a lack of well well-thought-out plan to control and guide the exercise. Yet urban renewal procedures and practices presuppose well-thought-out and well-laid-out proposals which involve the relocation of businesses, demolition of structures, and relocation of people, and the use of eminent domain. Being an allocated physical development effort, maps, charts, and plans are needed if such programmes are to be well articulated and coordinated.

Paucity of funds is another major challenge to the urban renewal initiatives of the Mimiko administration. An evaluation of the state budget in the last three years indicates that inadequate funds have been allocated to improving urban infrastructure generally. For instance, the state budget in 2012 reveals that out of total budget estimates of about ₦150 billion, only about 28 billion was allocated to infrastructure. This includes road construction and maintenance (₦16 billion), housing and environment (₦7 billion), water supply (₦4 billion and enhancement of electricity (₦1 billion). These were grossly inadequate to make a meaningful impact on the physical development of the state, let alone urban renewal. Besides, physical observation of some of the projects revealed a slow pace and or outright stoppage due to inadequate flow of cash.

Overcentralisation is another problem. There is a lack of synergy between the state government, local government, and the private sector. In the era of Public-Private-Partnerships (PPPs) in the conception, design, and execution of projects, this is largely lacking in the present renewal activity of the present administration. This is against the contemporary practice where large-scale infrastructure projects are being handled in conjunction with the private sector, which seems to be more effective and more cost-efficient. Moreover, the involvement of the private sector will help to improve the maintenance and sustainability of urban development projects.

Closely related to the above is the lack of public participation in the initiation and execution of the project in the commendable renewal initiatives of Mimiko’s administration in Akure. The renewal programmes of the administration suffer from inadequate citizen participation. While the majority of residents of the city approved and appreciated the activity as elaborated above, they were unhappy because they were not consulted in the determination of projects to be included in the programmes. This is because policies and programmes of government are better appreciated when communities, groups, and individuals are carried along in the developmental actions of government. The high levels of success already achieved can be further enhanced if deliberate efforts are made to win the confidence, cooperation, and support of the public in programme conception and implementation.

**4.4 Prospects of the Exercise**

An examination of the urban renewal programme in Akure, alongside its associated challenges, underscores the necessity of evaluating its potential for fostering sustainable urban development in both the state and the wider Nigerian context—particularly in a nation grappling with deteriorating urban infrastructure, inadequate services, and poor housing conditions. This need is strengthened by the fact that the initiative has not only gained public acceptance but has also been regarded as a model for addressing the pervasive urban decline in many cities of the developing world, where government interventions are often hampered by limited capacity and political will.

In the first instance, the bold, pragmatic way the project was initiated and implemented implies that actions capable of improving urban conditions are possible. Prior to the relocation of Arakale residents, it was thought impossible to carry out the exercise. This is because all the past administrations in the state attempted it without success. Thus, for a government to carry it out within four years shows that there is hope for positive actions and programmes to improve the welfare of the citizenry in the state and country. Closely related to the above is the issue of commitment to improving the living and working conditions of urban residents. The last four years have witnessed an unquestionable or unparalleled commitment to changing the environment of the city. What this suggests is that there is hope for urban development and improvement in urban governance in the country. It further suggests that the otherwise poor quality urban environment in the country can be reversed, improved, and upgraded to make our cities liveable.

Besides offering a plausible avenue or opportunities for improving the quality of the urban environment in the state, it is a veritable tool for creating employment for the teeming and growing population of unemployed youths, particularly those in the built environment. Thus, in the course of carrying out the exercise, several individuals, professionals, groups, and organisations have been engaged in providing one service or the other, thereby not only providing jobs for them but incomes and a boost to the economy generally.

Improved public participation in development initiatives and actions. Rather than employing the bulldozer approach to the urban renewal programme in the city, the government adopted public participation. This was amply demonstrated in the case of the relocation of Arakale residents. They were fully involved, paid their compensation, and even a relocation allowance of twenty thousand naira was given to them to assist and ease their movement from the place. Besides, major stakeholders in the city affairs were involved and consulted. Compensation was not only paid to those affected, but alternative markets in Oke Ijebu, Onyearugbulem market, and a parcel of land about 25 hectares was acquired for them in Aponmu (See the report of Arakale Street Relocation and Compensation Committee). This was a clear departure from previous experience in other parts of Nigeria where people are dispossessed of their buildings and demolished without adequate compensation or alternative places provided for them to resettle.

A good platform to better manage urban growth and development is another fallout of the current urban renewal exercise in the city. Hitherto, planning of the city has been ad hoc, unorganised, and less than pragmatic to cope with the rising population of the city. Thus, the programme offers a good platform for the rapid transformation of the social and economic fortune of the city. That the fortunes of the city can be improved rather than allow it to continue to deteriorate is an improvement over the lesser-fare and pro-inertia attitude of previous governments in the state.

**5.0 Policy Implication**

From the earlier conceptual framework, it is evident that effective urban renewal programmes are typically anchored in comprehensive planning frameworks supported by robust legislative and policy instruments (Roberts & Sykes, 2000; UN-Habitat, 2016; Cao, Deng, & Song, 2023; Bhadwal, & Kumar, 2025). Such structures not only provide clarity of vision but also ensure consistency, accountability, and continuity beyond political cycles. The review of Akure’s urban renewal process, however, reveals the absence of an articulated master plan and guiding policy, representing a significant institutional weakness. This policy gap is particularly critical given that the success of urban regeneration efforts in cities has been attributed to the presence of clear strategic frameworks that align physical, social, and economic interventions (Sepe, 2013; Robinson, 2008).

Although the administration of Mimiko in Ondo State has demonstrated vision, political will, and technical capacity in implementing the programme, the absence of a binding policy framework raises concerns regarding the sustainability of the initiative beyond the present regime. The risk of policy discontinuity is well-documented in the Nigerian urban governance context, where successive administrations often abandon or alter inherited projects due to shifts in political priorities (Mabogunje, 2011; Olayiwola et al., 2005). This underscores the necessity of institutionalizing urban renewal policies through legislation to safeguard investments and ensure long-term benefits.

Despite this structural limitation, the government’s interventions over three years have yielded tangible improvements in the physical and environmental quality of the study area. The essence of the programme was to revitalize the physical landscape of Akure, the capital of Ondo State. Key projects such as the dualization of Arakale Road, the upgrading of Oba Adesida/Oyemekun Road, dualization and installation of street furniture along Fiwasaye–Ado Ekiti Road; dualization of Ondo Road; establishment of an ultra-modern auto mart and mechanic village; construction and reconstruction of millennium markets; development of modern motor parks along Ondo Road; and the creation of Freedom Park, which involved the removal of old and dilapidated structures in the city centre and other parts of Akure. Similar infrastructure-led renewal strategies in Lagos (Koko & Bello, 2023) and Cape Town (Visser & Kotze, 2008) have shown that upgrading transportation networks, public markets, and recreational spaces can catalyse broader economic activity, attract investment, and improve urban livability.

The case of Akure, therefore, illustrates the transformative potential of urban renewal when projects are well-targeted and executed with technical competence. However, without a coherent legislative and policy backbone, these gains risk being eroded over time. Embedding the programme within a statutory urban development framework would not only preserve its achievements but also guide future interventions in a coordinated, participatory, and sustainable manner.

**6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations**

The foregoing discussion highlights that the urban renewal initiatives implemented under Mimiko’s administration over the past nine years have brought significant and commendable transformation to the city of Akure, as acknowledged by its residents. However, the study reveals that these programmes were not supported by sufficiently comprehensive plans to guide their execution, a shortcoming that could undermine their long-term sustainability. While the Mimiko administration demonstrated remarkable vision, passion, knowledge, and the capacity to deliver impactful interventions—attributes recognized by both this study and external bodies such as UN-Habitat—these qualities cannot be assumed for subsequent administrations in the state. To ensure continuity and sustainable impact, future urban renewal efforts in Akure and comparable settings should be anchored on a well-defined citywide master plan that integrates housing, infrastructure, transportation, and environmental priorities. Institutionalizing the programme, backed by approved planning frameworks and enabling legislation, will help preserve and build upon the gains recorded during Mimiko’s tenure. Achieving urban renewal objectives will also require balancing the interests of local landowners, residents, and other stakeholders, and ensuring that decision-making bodies reflect an equitable mix of built-environment professionals and community representatives. Strengthened coordination between state and local governments, complemented by active private sector participation, will enhance policy alignment and resource efficiency. Furthermore, transparent and fair compensation systems, supported by effective grievance mechanisms, should be established to safeguard the rights of those affected by renewal projects. Encouraging participatory planning from inception through implementation will foster a sense of ownership among residents and minimize opposition. Finally, securing sustainable financing through public–private partnerships, municipal bonds, donor contributions, and targeted urban development levies will ensure the continuity and success of urban transformation initiatives.

**Competing Interests Disclaimer:**

Authors have declared that they have no known competing financial interests OR non-financial interests, OR personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

**Disclaimer (Artificial intelligence)**

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

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