

STREET SIDE SPACE RESOURCES AND URBAN AESTHETICS IN METROPOLITAN LAGOS

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ABSTRACT

Streets provide vantage positions to experience the city and evaluate the quality of its physical form. The attraction and level of comfort achieved in the city is reflected by the wise concept with which its streets are platted. A city can influence its aesthetic quality by the degree to which the street side space resources especially trees, light fixtures, furniture and communication media are ordered. This paper examined the composition of street side resources in metropolitan Lagos. The study revealed that the foundation of the prevailing aesthetic shortcoming in Lagos is rooted in the non-conformity of the streets to designed standards. It is observed that Lagos streets are framed by filthy open drainage channels. This concept did not accommodate the role of street side spaces in enhancing the beauty of human settlements. Since city aesthetics reflect the cultural and social values of its inhabitants, there is a need to repackage Lagos street system to enhance sustainable aesthetic. Such repackaging demands a futuristic street design that focuses on environmental beauty. The study recommends an interrelated six-step solution including futuristic street philosophy that accommodates opinion of key stakeholders in street enterprise.

Key Words: Street - side resources, street aesthetics, modernism, undesirables, sustainability, ecological design.

1.0 INTRODUCTION:

The definition of city varies. This study views a city as an architectural object on a regional landscape intuitively designed by many professionals to reflect the inherent social, cultural, economic and political will of the inhabitants. It displays the history, culture and technological capacity of its people. These intrinsic features are exhibited by ordered facilities which generate the mental image for its people and visitors alike. While some human settlements are aesthetically pleasing others may be filthy, chaotic, ugly and poverty stricken. These descriptive attributes are showcased in the components of urban centers. Lynch (1969) classified the component of a city into five elements namely districts, nodes, edges, landmarks and paths. The latter, paths, are movement corridors including walkways, waterways and streets. Streets are the most prominent paths in cities as well as the main determinants of urban forms. According to Eisner (1980) 33% of urban land areas are devoted to road networks with the primary function of transportation of goods and services. A typical street is not only the asphalt paved base plane but also adjacent structures, sidewalks, intersections, utility lines, furniture, city people and their medium of circulation. These elements fuse to present the perceived image of the street. They provide vantage positions to experience the city, interpret community information and evaluate the aesthetic quality of its physical form. This beauty is encoded in the visual configuration composed of shape, color, texture and arrangement of various elements.

Lagos metropolis is a cluster of many townships with indigenous core areas and planned outer shell. The outer shell is rooted in the colonial philosophy that established the then European Quarters now referred to as Government Reservation Areas. This philosophy is as expressed in 1904 Lord Lugard Cantonment Declaration. The declaration specified that the G.R.A. as a town generous in edible landscape and extensive public open spaces at both residential and administrative areas connected by shaded pathways. Native areas were to be left intact with the characteristic dingy, narrow and winding streetscape. The relationship between the indigenous core and planned surrounding of each township reflects the relationship between colonial European quarters and native areas. While most indigenous core is made up of narrow streets framed by plastered adobe courtyard

houses, the outer extensions are properly subdivided often in a gridiron pattern. Arterial roads were later introduced as urban renewal inputs to facilitate easy movement between the townships. These roads now constitute the transportation spinal cord of the metropolis including the Bank Anthony / Ikorodu Road / Western Avenue. This paper examines the elements that influence the aesthetics of metropolitan Lagos streetscapes.

2.0 STREETS IN URBAN FORM

Streets in History

The attraction and level of comfort experienced in a city is reflected by the wise concept with which its streets are platted. This is because quality of life issues including environmental decency and distinct community character easily find expression in streets. The concept of street planning throughout the ages reflects the prevailing social, economic, political and technological development. The pedestrian oriented medieval era street network was organically conceived to reflect the place of predominant non motorized transportation mode. These streets were radial, curvilinear and terminated at the defensive city walls and moats (Mumford 1969). They differ from streets in renaissance urbanism. Unlike the irregular medieval paths, baroque urbanism opted for straight streets to facilitate quick movement by new carriage oriented transportation technology. The dual goal of physical manifestation of military authority and aesthetic improvement was achieved through the introduction of tree lined boulevards terminating in domineering landmarks.

Cranz (2000) observed that the harmonious design of city streets with the natural environment climaxed during the 1861 Public Park movement. Urban parks were linked by parkways and tree lined boulevards to create metropolitan open space system. It was a total reliance on the force of nature for the aesthetic improvement of cities. Eisner (1980) reported the influence of David Burham's 1875 City Beautiful movement on modern street aesthetics. The City Beautiful model was originally meant to establish Chicago's World Trade fair ground as an entrepreneurial might of emerging America. It soon developed into an all time aesthetic transformation formula for aging cities. At the peak of City Beautiful Movement in America cities, Ebenezer Howard introduced the Garden

City model in 1902 (Hall 1988). Garden City, like the previous concept arose from the need for ordered urban environment. Land use zoning was employed as a major planning instrument to separate residential, industrial and commercial districts. The role of streets as transportation corridors and major determinant of subdivision development in new settlements took a new dimension. This was partly due to the reality of motorcar technological invention at the tail end of 19th century. The immediate concern then was the evolution of urban circulatory system that would accommodate the sudden change in transportation medium powered by fossil fuel engine. Roads from residential neighborhoods to other sectors of the city were stratified to accommodate projected traffic volumes. Three broad categories of street hierarchy including arterial, collectors and local residential streets were introduced. Within each of these categories are localized variations. The difference between these street designs is dictated by traffic volume and speed. Street platting and design quietly embraced the character of modernism.

Streets in Modernism

Modernism is an art and architecture theory that celebrated human ingenuity. According to Hargreaves (1983), modernism is a cultural attitude that long for perfection, clarity, order, and physical purity. Modernism totally believes in the technological output of human creativity. Scientific modernism street design allowed for a wider area to accept additional function as a corridor for basic utilities necessary in livable community (De Chiara et al 1982). The width of a typical street referred to as public right of way (ROW) stretched between two opposite lots. Public rights of way vary in width and are defined by street hierarchy. Within the right of way are the surfaced transportation route, sidewalk, utilities lines, street tree planting strips and community information medium. While landscape works especially tree and front yard lawn is the focal point of street's natural beauty, paved sidewalks, kerbed roadway, visually friendly sewage networks, billboards, traffic signs and street furniture display the cultural aesthetics of streets. A prototypical street cross section defines the various street spaces and resources that allow for urban livability (Figure.1). At the center of right of way is the paved roadway. Street side space is the area between the kerb and the adjacent property line. Within these spaces are resources that influence the aesthetics of the street. The provision,

arrangement, use and degradation of these spaces and their resources collectively define the aesthetic level.

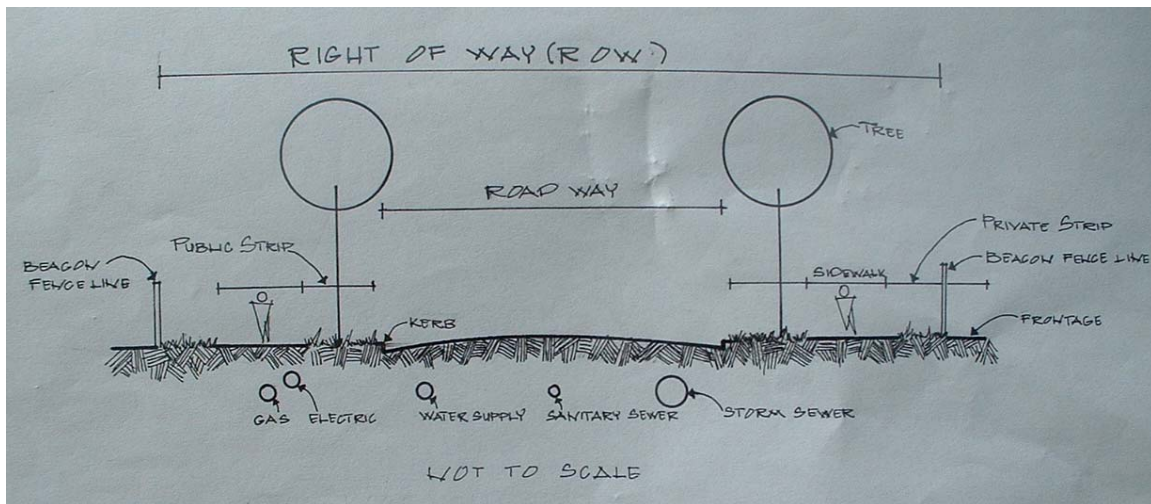


FIGURE 1: PROTOTYPICAL STREET DESIGN

Cities in modernism became architectural objects on regional landscapes crisscrossed by highly geometric streets that display the conquering human activities. The shortcomings of this technologically inspired street design is the inability to manage the wastes from physical development process especially emission of hazardous gases from thousands of automobiles that daily load the streets. The destructive impact of gaseous emissions from fossil fuel driven engines especially carbon dioxide is worrisome. Roseland (2003) referred to this destructive effect as degradation of life support system since they play major role in the depletion of ozone layer, global warming and acid rain. The much celebrated modernism street concept collapsed under the weight of the very technology that set it up namely automobile transportation mode. Professionals in built environment usually point to the symbolic failure of Pruitt-Igoe in 1972 as the demise of totalitarian modernism (Turner et al 2000). A new art and architecture philosophy referred to as post modernism quietly emerged to solve the myriads of environmental problems in streetscapes.

Streets in Post Modernism

The concern for generational continuity pushed street planning to the sustainability paradigm. Sustainable development came at the same time when global art, architecture

and city planning community evolved the concept of post modernism in the provision of decent human settlements. The concepts of sustainable development and post modernism focused on the correction of both physical and visual degradation created by the wanton consumption of natural resources. The second U.N. Conference on Human Settlement (Habitat II) subscribed to the goals of sustainable development through the use of ecological variables to keep the well being of man continuously in urban centers (UNDP 1996). Simulating ecological process in planning of human settlement is what Ryn et al (1999) referred to as ecological design. It is the incorporation of the knowledge of how nature operates into city design process. Ecologically designed human settlements take advantage of available energy sources. It equally demands that buildings, open spaces, streets and other transportation corridors meet high energy efficiency standards. The goal of ecologically planned streets is to simulate the aesthetic and thermal modulation inherent in nature. Downton (2003) summed up this principle as pedestrianisation of urban streets, introduction of bicycle mode of transportation and incorporation of vegetation within the street spaces to improve city aesthetics. This paper therefore examines the spatial configuration of Lagos streets, the resources that define their forms and the inherent aesthetics.

2.0 STUDY AREA –METROPOLITAN LAGOS.

Metropolitan Lagos occupies the heart of the State with Atlantic seaboard as the southern boundary. The 30 kilometers broad southern base stretch along Bight of Benin, from Victoria Island to Ojo Township. It tapered northern wards and terminates at Agege at a distance of about 26 Kilometers. The study area is made up of the thirteen Local Government Councils including Eti Osa, Lagos Island, Lagos Mainland, Surulere, Alimosho, Ikeja, Agege, Ajeromi, Somolu, Kosofe, Mushin, Isolo-Oshodi and Ikorodu. The study evaluates the aesthetics of the metropolis streetscape base on the availability, visual form and state of paved roadway, sidewalks, street trees, utility lines and conflicting use.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

The research methodology adopted a base line study of selected streets from selected townships in three Local Government areas. Geographical spread was a major consideration in the choice of council. The Local Government Areas in the state were grouped into three geographical sectors namely south, central and north. A council area was chosen to represent each group. A township in each Council area was chosen. Four streets representing the three broad hierarchies of city roads, that is, arterial, collector and local streets at both indigenous core area and planned extension were chosen. Detail study area is as shown below:

Southern Metropolitan Lagos

Selected Local Government: *Eti Osa*

Selected Township: *Ikoyi*

Selected Streets :

- Arterial (multi lane) - *Kingsway Road.*
- Collector - *Alexander Road.*
- Local Residential - *Rumens St.*
- Indigenous Core Street – *Ajeniya St.*

Central Metropolitan Lagos

Selected Local Government : *Somolu*

Selected Township : *Bariga*

Selected Streets :

- Arterial - *Saint Finbars Road / Jagunmolu St.*
- Collector - *Fola Agoro St.*
- Local Residential – *Ilaje Road.*
- Indigenous Core Local Street – *Falade St.*

Northern Metropolitan Lagos

Selected Local Government: *Ikeja.*

Selected Township : *Ikeja.*

Selected Streets:

- Arterial - *Awolowo Way*
- Collector – *Toyin St..*
- Local Residential - *Olufunmilayo Okikiola St.*
- Indigenous Core Local Street – *Ipodo Road.*

Inventory of street side spaces was conducted to record existing resources. Emphasis was laid on width of right of way, paved surface, kerb, street trees, outdoor communication media and street furniture. A scoring technique for each resource and space based on a

scale of 0 to 3 was adopted. Aesthetics of each street was evaluated based on the percentage of added score.

5.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The use of high level fence as a security device in the last 40 years visually shrinks the size of the right of way (ROW) and deprives street users the benefits associated with privately landscaped front yards. As shown in Table 1, the average ROW for local residential streets and collectors are 12.1 and 23.2 meters respectively. This differ from the government specified minimum standard for the city which is 15 and 18 meters respectively (Lagos State Government 1991).The ROW in indigenous core streets of Ipodo Road, Falade and Ajeniya Streets are 10.24 meters, 8.22meters and 9 meters respectively. This is far less than specified standard of 13 meters. The city subdivision guideline did not indicate the width of paved surface and sidewalks. In the metropolis, the conceptual location of open drainage channels along collector and residential streets reduced the planting strip to the narrow width between the beacon line and the drainage channel (Figure 2). As shown in Table 1, the width of this single strip range between 600mm and 1740mm in indigenous core streets, 1000mm to 4000mm for collector roads, and 1600mm to 4330mm along arterial streets.

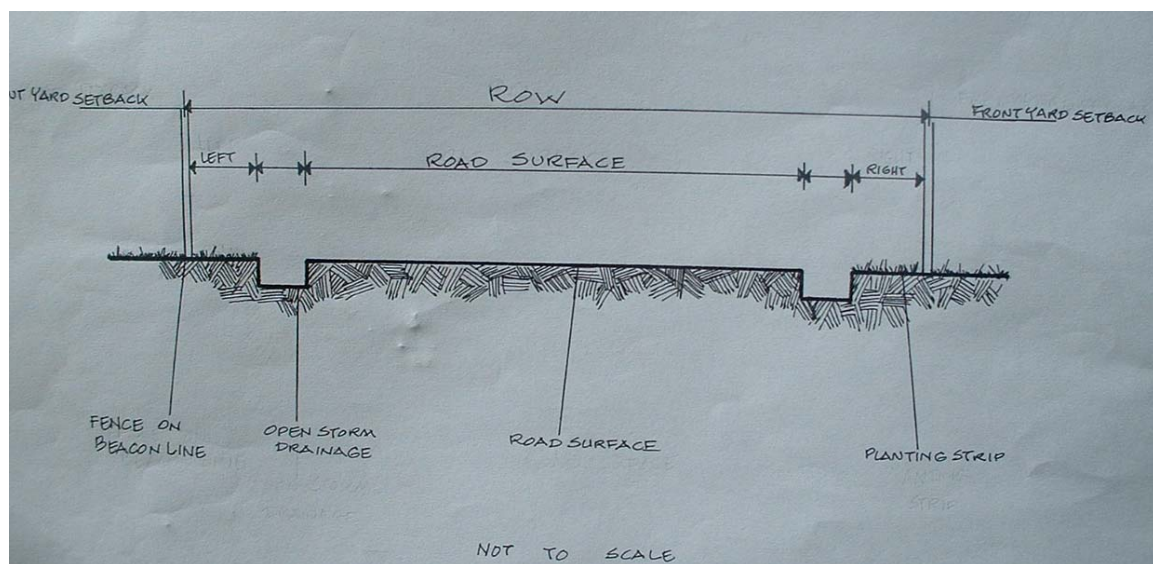


FIGURE 2: TYPICAL LAGOS STREET DESIGN

Streets as movement corridors accommodate both vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The average international standard on pavement width for residential, collector and arterial streets are 9 meters, 10meters and 12meters respectively (DeChiara et al. 1982). In comparism, the paved surface for the study area vary between 12.4 and 18.57 meters for arterial streets; 6 to 17.5 meters for collector roads; and 5.3 to 7.3 meters for residential streets. Ideally, the paved road way should be framed by concrete kerb to discourage parking on planting strips and sidewalk. As revealed in Table 2 and 3, only two of the arterial streets namely Kingsway Road and Awolowo Way have concrete kerbs.

The occurrence of frequent accidents encouraged the separation of pedestrian movement from vehicular route. Standard sidewalk width varies from 1200mm to 3000mm depending on adjoining land use. None of the collectors, residential and indigenous core streets have sidewalks. Awolowo Way and Kingsway Road, both arterial streets, have an average of 2500mm on each side. In all commercial streets, the retail shops encroached on side walks and planting strips. A major resource on the planting strip is street tree. Street trees soften the massive urban hard surface, add seasonal colour and complete the network of metropolitan open space system. It is a major environmental tool used to define community and neighborhood characters. The location of trees within the planting strip, (either in public or private strips for standard street design) is a reflection of street's cardinal orientation and desired environmental goal. The baroque concept of tree lined avenues and highly vegetated boulevards in ecological city concept had no place in the city. The functional baroque streets represented by Kingsway Road and Awolowo Way have adequate planting strips and median to receive trees. But there is no defined planting scheme within the study area.

Utility cables play major role in the location of street trees. The Lagos State Town and Country Planning law (1986) specified 30 meters and 60 meter minimum set back between building line and Power Holding Corporation of Nigeria (PHCN) high tension 132kv and 330kv overhead cables respectively. This was not adhered to in the study area. The location of 11kv PHCN overhead wires along the narrow planting strips is the most visible in all the studied streets. This is compounded by the 16mm service wires from the

street PHCN posts to the adjoining buildings. Thirdly, the location of PHCN transformer units at street corner spaces further complicate the visual constraints generated by overhead wires. Indiscriminate use of wood, hollow steel pipe and concrete posts without due consideration for shape, height and appropriate diameter is the fourth effect. The wiring system of Nigeria Telecommunication Company (NITEL) finally completes the cobweb of public utility wiring system over the skyline of Lagos streets. NITEL posts are located opposite PHCN poles on the narrow planting strips. Both NITEL and PHCN cables limit introduction of tree resources.

The study identified advertising, petty trading and vehicular parking as major activities within the street spaces. The goal of advertising services is to disseminate information about services and products for the visual consumption of the people. Advertising media visually influence the perceptual value of streets as urban open spaces. The most prevalent advertising media is posters on fences, building walls, foot bridges, overhead bridges and retaining walls. Four broad categories of posters were observed in all the studied streets namely religious posters, political campaign posters, academic posters and performing arts especially “home video”. While posters, banners and sign boards hang on the façade of buildings, sign posts and billboards are located on the planting strips, islands, intersections and street corners. The observed problems of billboards include non adherence to the stipulated 200 meters spacing in all the studied streets.

Street trading and mobile market are major commercial activities on studied street spaces. While street trading refers to hawking of goods to commuters held up in the usual traffic delays, the later is the conversion of planting strips, median, islands and intersections of the streets to make shift markets. All the fourteen streets studied indicated the illegal use of the spaces for both activities. This is compounded by illegal use of streets as parking lots and junkyards for dilapidated automobiles on the collector, residential and indigenous core area streets surveyed. Besides contributing to the strenuous traffic problems, the parked vehicles depreciate the visual quality of the streets. The visual degradation is further heightened by the observed presence of “undesirables”. According to Whyte (1980), “urban undesirables” includes lunatics, destitute and itinerary beggars.

They are the ignored members of the city by ineffective welfare program. The irrational behavior of the group manifests in the destruction and mutilation of the few city art works and street furniture. None of the 14 streets studied is free of “undesirables”.

The state of the studied streets aesthetics is summarized in Tables 2 and 3. The 59% aesthetic value of Kingsway Road is an indication of good value. This is due to the presence of sidewalks, minimum impact of overhead cables, presence of sub surface storm sewer drainage system and absence of street parking. Rumsey street’s 50% is the highest of all residential streets within planned outer residential estates. With the exception of Awolowo Road and Alexander Street that are fair aesthetically, the remaining streets are aesthetically poor. In all only 16% of the study area is marginally beautiful and these are found in the GRA planned and built by colonial masters. The remaining 74% are aesthetically deficient and are the products of post independent Nigeria. It is a reflection of how much post independent physical planning professionals in Lagos think about urban aesthetics in the process of city building.

The foundation of the prevailing aesthetic shortcomings in the metropolis is rooted in the non-conformity of the various hierarchy of city circulatory system to standard street design as shown Figure 1. The existing concept portray Lagos streets as thoroughfares framed by filthy and silted open storm sewer drainage channels with irregular concrete fence background along the beacon line (Figure 2). This contradicts modernism street design concept that accommodates pedestrians, utility lines and trees. With the exception of Awolowo Way and Kingsway Road that have sub surface drainage system, the remaining streets are drained by open channel system that is blocked by solid wastes. The result is flooding of most streets during the six months rainy season. The metropolitan government needs an alternative street design concept that will drain the neighbourhood roads without reducing the right of way.

6.0 CORRECTIVE STRATEGY

The aesthetics of the metropolis needs a comprehensive environmental solution that will balance the interest of the various stake holders in street business. Figure 3 explores a

schematic 6-layer model that relates spatial planning to the physical reality of cityscape. Layer 1 emphasizes the inventory and analysis of contextual sand barrier-lagoon biogeography of Lagos. This will provide a sustainable solution to the active hydrological cycle and torrential rainfall regime.

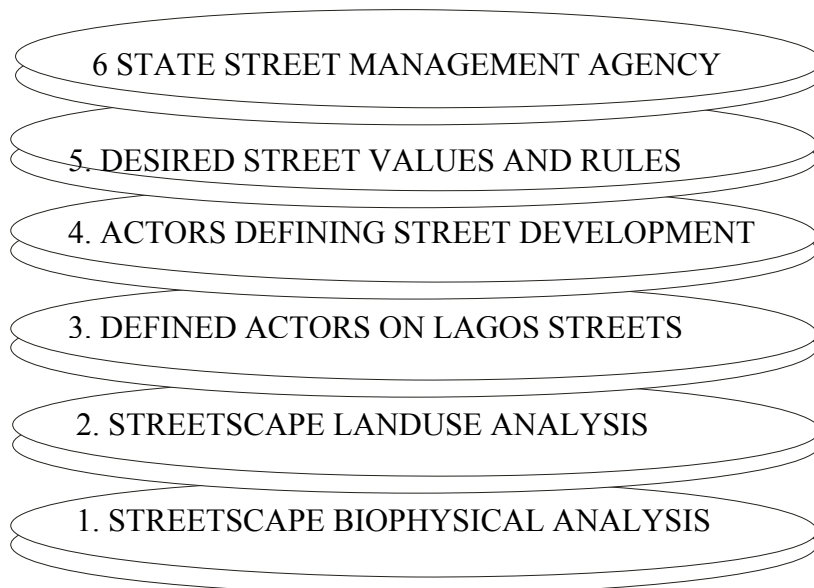


FIGURE 3: SCHEMATIC MODEL FOR S STREET AESTHETIC IN LAGOS

Layer 2 of the model completes the inventory and analysis of environmental variables. Streetscape land use analysis refers to the comprehension of transportation modes and facilities; recreational; ceremonial; and commercial use of the various street categories. The process of generating a new street design concept must recognize the inputs of key stakeholders in street business. They constitute actors in street business. Such stakeholders include Lagos State Ministries of Works, Environment, Physical Planning; Local Government Councils; Environmental Design Professional Bodies; Nigerian Telecommunication Company, National Electric Power Authority, Private gas companies, Outdoor Advertising Association of Nigeria; Market Women Association, Nigerian Union of Road Transport Workers and Community Development Association. Actors that define current streetscape will look at the impact of existing government organizations and institutional body that conceptualize Lagos streetscape. Currently the business of development control rests with the planning organization in the three tier

governmental level. But there is no clear-cut body to control streets and roads in the city. Road design and construction is within the portfolio of Ministry of Works while city storm system is under Ministry of Physical Planning. Ministry of Environment controls the solid wastes, sanitary sewerage and tree planting. Too many governmental agencies scheme to control transportation system.

Desired street values and rules to sustain the values will naturally emanate from the inventory, analysis and synthesis of the first four layers. This layer looks at long term aesthetic image and the physical design details to achieve it. The physical design is upheld by achievable standards and targets that will enhance livability goals of the metropolis. The last layer advocates for street specific institutional frame work. It calls for street management body that will draw up the standards, periodically conduct environmental audit to evaluate the success of set standards and targets. This is where political will plays dominant role. There is need for a progressive political philosophy that will free Lagos to benefit from the prevailing sustainable environmental planning practices.

7.0 CONCLUSION.

Modernism bequeathed upon twentieth century street design that was influenced by automobile technology. It is a design that displays city aesthetics in the symmetrical street spaces. But the philosophy that molded Lagos streets disregarded the basic tenet of modernism, which is order. Attempt to specify street design parameters in the 1986 Building Plan Regulation of Lagos State Town and Country Planning Law is limited to building set back. There is need for a new subdivision ordinance that will provide design specifications for right of way, paved roadway, side walk, planting strip, drainage finishes, utilities location, traffic control signs, street furniture and maintenance requirements. A necessary appendage is street tree ordinance that specifies the species, size, and sustainable maintenance schedule. Such standard must bear in mind the lagoon - sand barrier coastal geomorphology, the prevailing cultural use of Lagos streets and the long term transportation goals of the metropolis.

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TABLE 1
STREET SIDE SPACE INVENTORY –TECHNICAL INFORMATION

	STREETS	Land Use	R. O. W	Paved surface	Kerb	Side walk	Strip Left	Strip Right	Median width	Drainage
1	ARTERIAL STREETS									
1.1	Kings way Road	Commercial	40	18.57	.2	3	4.33	7.6	6.5	Sub-drainage
1.2	Finbars/Jagunmolu	Mix use	20	12.4	-	-	1.6	2.2	-	.91
1.3	Awolowo Way-Ikeja	Commercial	29.5	17.5	.2	2	4.1	3.09	.91	sub-drainage
2.0	COLLECTOR ROADS									
2.1	Alexander Avenue	Residential	28.5	6	-	-	12.90	11.9	-	-
2.2	Fola Agoro Street	Mixed use	20	16.4	-	-	1	.8	-	.91
2.3	Toyin Street, Ikeja	Mixed use	21	17.5	-	-	.38	.3	-	1.2
3.0	RESIDENTIAL ROAD									
3.1	Rumsey Road	Residential	13.4	5.3	-	-	4.1	4.0	-	-
3.2	Ilaje Road	Residential	12.3	7.3	-	-	1.2	1.2	-	.9
3.3	Olufunmilayo Okikiola	Residential	10.5	7.3	-	-	1.01	1.00	-	.91
4.0	Indigenous Core Streets									
4.1	Falade street	Residential	8.3	5.7	-	-	.60	.06	-	-
4.2	Ipodo Road	Residential	10.2	6.8	-	-	1.74	1.7	-	.9
4.3	Ajeniya street	Residential	9.0	5.8	-	-	.70	.70	-	17.5

SOURCE: Field Survey 2004

TABLE 2
STREET SIDE SPACE RESOURCES AESTHETIC VALUATION

STREETS	Road Way	Advert.	Drainage	Kerbs	Side walk	Strip left	Strip right	Street trading	Power line	Tree	Telephone line	Street Parking	Total	%
Alexander	2	2	2	0	0	1	1	3	2	0	2	2	17	47
Fola Agoro Street	2	2	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	11	31
Toyin St	2	2	1	0	0	1	1	2	1	0	1	0	11	31
Rumsey Road -	2	2	2	-	-	1	1	3	2	0	2	3	16	50
Ilaje road -Bariga	2	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	8	22
Olufunmilayo Okiki Ola Street	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	8	22
Falade Street	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	5	14
Ipodo Rd (Ikeja)	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	6	17
Ajeniya Street	1	2	1	0	0	1	1	2	1	0	1	1	11	31

Source: Field Survey 2004

Scoring technique.

- 3 represents availability, standard specification, excellent condition
- 2 represents availability, fair standard, fairly good condition
- 1 represents availability, poor standard, poor condition
- 0 represents not available, poor standard, poor condition

Aesthetic Value Evaluation: See Table 3

TABLE 3
ARTERIAL - STREET SIDE SPACE RESOURCES -- AESTHETIC EVALUATION

	STREETS	Land Use	Adver tising	Drainage Channel	Kerb	Side walk	Planting strip left	Planting Strip right	Street trading	Power line	Tree	Telephone line	Street Parking	Median	Total	%
1	Kings way	2	2	3	2	2	1	1	2	2	0	2	2	2	27	59
2	<i>Finbars/</i> Jagunmolu	01	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	8	21
3	Awolowo way	02	1	3	2	2	1	1	2	1	0	1	2	1	19	49

Source: Field Survey 2004

Scoring technique.

- 3 represents availability, standard specification, excellent condition
- 2 represents availability, fair standard, fairly good condition
- 1 represents availability, poor standard, poor condition
- 0 represents not available, poor standard, poor condition

Aesthetic Value Evaluation

- 70% -100% represents very high aesthetic value
- 50% to 69% represents good aesthetic value
- 40% to 49% represents fair aesthetic value
- 0% to 39% represents poor aesthetic value

